# THE MYSTERY OF KUN-JA-MUCK CAVE

GEORGE F. TIBBITTS

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# THE MYSTERY OF KUN-JA-MUCK CAVE

# THE MYSTERY OF KUN-JA-MUCK CAVE

BY

GEORGE F. TIBBITTS

A STRANGE MYSTERY TRAILING THROUGH THE BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAIN AND LAKE COUNTRY OF THE ADIRONDACKS

*FRONTISPIECE BY*
FRANK R. SOUTHARD

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# THE MYSTERY OF KUN-JA-MUCK CAVE

## CHAPTER I

### DRIVEN TO THE WILDERNESS

Hackneyed in business, wearied at the oar,
Which thousands, once fast chained to quit no more,
The statesman, lawyer, merchant, man of trade,
Pant for the refuge of some rural shade,
For regions where, in spite of sin and woe,
Traces of Eden are still seen below,
Where mountain, river, forest, field and grove,
Remind him of his Maker's power and love.
To them the deep recess of dusky groves,
Or forest where the deer securely roves,
The fall of waters, and the song of birds,
And hills that echo to the distant herds,
Are luxuries excelling all the glare
The world can boast, and her chief favourites share.

THE train on the Fonda, Johnstown and Gloversville Railroad was marked up on time. Only two taxis were at the Northville station. They had come more from habit than from expectation of business. The tourist season had not yet begun, but the breaking forth of the spring foliage and early flowers which lined the roadways told of the rapidly approaching days when thousands of weary

people would leave the cities to seek refreshment and new life in the hills.

"Hope I get some business on this here train," said a long, lank driver to the other. Seated on a wobbly baggage truck with their backs to the station wall, both men appeared eager for new arrivals.

"Need it bad," continued the speaker. "Been a long, hard winter, and I got behind with the store bill, and I owe the doctor a lot besides."

"Well, y'ain't worryin' much 'bout it, be yuh, Joe?"

"Oh, no, not 'xackly," replied Joe. "Just like t' keep things even, or 'bout so. Th' woman had th' hardest end o' the job, lookin' after the kids when they was sick. First 'twas th' measles, then th' 'hoop'n cough. 'Course they all had t' have it. When yuh git a family big's mine, Chunky, y'll have somethin' t' think about."

The one called Chunky was as fat and round as Joe was tall and thin; and, while the two were close friends during the winter, in the summer they became keen rivals, for both depended largely on the tourist traffic for their livelihood.

"Now don't talk t' me like that, Slim," retorted Chunky, using the other's nickname as he always did when somewhat angered. "You know right well I have t' take care o' mother,

and my sister and her kid. And the damn kid's father, too," in a tone of disgust. "Besides all that, didn't I help other fam'lies? Guess you ain't got nothin' on me, Slim Joe!"

"There y' go, gittin' all riled up," remonstrated Joe. "Every time I remind yuh y're an old bach with nobody t' lean on——"

"Waal," drawled the other, his contempt and wrath not in the least abated, "I don't know 's I want anybody t' lean on. I'd ruther lean on myself than be slim 's a fence rail, an' lean on a poor, hard-workin' wife with a half dozen kids hanging on her skirts."

The station agent lazily rose from the box upon which he had been sitting.

"Here she comes," he announced. "Jest pullin' out o' Sacandaga Park."

Apparently the good-natured man thought the argument had become a little too personal. "See who can scoop th' business," he suggested. "Who gits th' first haul from some city yap?"

In a moment the train pulled in, if a train it could have been called. One car, driven by a gasoline motor, sufficed for engine, baggage, passenger car and smoker. The two rivals jostled each other for conspicuous standing space, calling out anxiously to the few passengers who alighted.

"Take yuh anywhere—right here waitin' fer yuh—"

Both drivers had their eyes fixed intently on a young man, the only "city yap" among the arrivals.

"I'll hook him," came from Chunky in a hoarse whisper as the stranger approached.

Joe made no reply, but kept up his chatter.

"Come this way, Mister, an' I'll haul y' anywhere. Won't talk y' to death, nuther," added Slim Joe after scanning the stranger's face more closely.

Byron Gray heard and saw both men. After a moment of hesitation he turned to Joe, with a curt nod.

"You'll do," he said. "I'm rather tired, and am hunting for a quiet place and some one who is not disposed to talk me to death."

Joe took the stranger's bag, turned a brief but triumphant smile upon his rival, and led the way to his car.

"Where to?" he queried.

"I guess that is important," acknowledged the young man. "I am headed for Lake Pleasant for to-night. I don't know where I will land after that. Just on my way to the woods —anywhere to be out of doors and away— from city life."

"I get y', sir. Know all 'bout it. Seen many a one like yuh before. Y'll be a new man when y've been in th' hills a spell."

"Oh, I don't care much," said the stranger in a tone of indifference. "I'm not particu-

larly fond of the wilderness, at least for a twelve months' stay. Case of nerves, you know. The doctor said I must remain in the woods for a year or become a wreck for life."

As he spoke a gloom of bitterness crossed Gray's face. The man looked weary of life, almost haggard. Pausing a moment as he mentally reviewed the life he had just left, the ceaseless struggle, the strain and stress which never abated, Gray gave to the taxi driver some indication of what the feverish activity and fierce commercial rivalry of our modern city life may do for a man. Gray's face was pale, and at times his lips twitched with a slight, nervous movement. He was by no means an invalid. On the contrary, his physical strength had been impaired far less than his paleness might have indicated. Gray's nerves were ragged, frayed almost to the breaking point, but his every motion evidenced a reserve of latent energy. It was this energy which had nearly been his undoing, for his physician had declared that Gray's physical energy was driving him steadily to a mental collapse.

So Gray had come to the Great North Woods, unwillingly and indifferently. Those woods and mountains, so near the city and yet so remote from its ever-throbbing turmoil, held no fascination for him as he stood on the station platform. His mood was, at the moment, one of discouragement, overwhelmed as he was

with the life he had left. His wealth had brought him no great happiness. Could this wilderness cure his physical weakness and mental apathy?

Disinterestedly he asked if there were a place to eat nearby.

"There's a boardin' house an' a lunch room, but none of 'em's fit t' eat in," said Slim Joe. "S'pose we drive 'round by way o' my house if yer hungry—my Jane'll cook us somethin' warm an' it won't be like rest'runt grub. I c'n tell her where I'm goin', too."

"Just as you say," agreed Gray. "Time is nothing to me."

They drove in silence through a sandy side street until Joe stopped in front of an unpainted cottage, a very humble place, and badly in need of repair. Joe led the way up the path, Gray following with a scarcely noticeable air of distaste. They had not gone far when the door opened and a motherly-looking woman, completely covered by a big, old-fashioned apron, appeared on the threshold. Four excited children quickly crowded past her and rushed down the path.

"That's her—an' the kids," said Joe proudly. "Gosh, they're a great bunch," he added, with a smile that invited the stranger's approval of the romping offspring.

Two boys clung to Joe's legs, clamoring for a ride, while the two girls, with smoothly combed

hair parted in the middle, quiet and shy in the presence of the stranger, took hold of their father's hands. The youngest child, held in the mother's arms, squealed with delight.

"That's the way they allers carry on," Jane apologized, addressing the stranger without waiting for an introduction. "If he'd come home ten times a day they'd all have t' go through the same thing."

Joe bestowed a fond look upon his wife, and explained Gray's presence.

"We're goin' t' Orendaga, Jane. Must hurry, an' this gentleman 's mighty hungry. Anythin' in the house t' eat?"

"I can git some dinner for you men pretty quick," she replied. "It's cookin' this minute. Me an' the children'll wait for ours 'til yer gone, 'cause they eat awful slow."

"Do eat with us," urged Gray. "I'm in no great hurry, and am fond of children. I'd like to have them near."

He felt a change in his attitude toward these homely people. They were so different from the people with whom he usually mingled. Dimly Gray knew that they had something unknown to the city dweller, a calm acceptance of life as it was, without worry or heated struggle for great wealth. He began to wish to understand them better.

Joe and his wife disappeared into the kitch-

en, and Gray, quite by accident, overheard a scrap of conversation.

"How much is he goin' to give you for makin' the trip?"

"Don't know—ain't asked my price."

"Be easy on him, Joe—I know we need it, but be reasonable. We'll catch up on our bills 'fore th' summer ends."

What strange people were these, thought Gray. Their lack of avarice was something new to him. Never before had he known of people who talked as the two he had just overheard.

In order not to hear more of their conversation, Gray took the smaller girl by the hand and began to question her. She seemed very willing to talk, and after volunteering the information that she was in the fourth grade at school, and that her name was Nellie, asked Gray if he were going to stay a long time at their house.

He shook his head. "No, Nellie, I'm going away, but sometime I may come back."

"Oh, I hope so," she said, thoughtfully.

This old-fashioned, frank-eyed child, with her shy talk, kindled a warmth of affection within Gray's discouraged soul, and gave him a taste of simplicity and honesty that cheered his heart. Like all big-souled Americans, his first impulse was to give. Reaching into his pocket, he took out a bill, folded it tightly, and

placed it in Nellie's hand, pressing her fingers around it.

"Share that with the other children when I have gone," he whispered. "Remember," he cautioned in a playful tone, at the same time shaking his finger at her, "don't let anybody see it until I have gone, away out of sight."

She nodded, her big gray eyes sparkling with delight. Gray was surprised to find that he had surrendered to such a sentimental bit of foolishness.

The simple meal that Jane made ready was very attractive to Gray. It was plain, well cooked, and appetizing; the fragrance which hung over the table in a cloud of steam lured Gray to an unusual heartiness. Occasionally during the meal he exchanged a knowing smile with Nellie, who kept one hand carefully under the table.

After eating, the two men said farewell to the rest of the family and were soon on the road to Orendaga. As they journeyed northward over the state road which was known as the southern entrance to the Adirondack Park, flickerings of bright color among the trees told Gray that the birds were rapidly returning from the south lands. The air was balmy, sweetened with the fragrance of balsam and pine. Standing out against the green, the supple shafts of white birch seemed bold, yet beautiful, in the sunlight; maples were shooting

forth their foliage of a lighter green; and the flowers, in silent eloquence, spoke most sweetly all along the way.

Higher and higher wound the road, now through shallow valley, now beside the babbling and glistening Sacandaga, climbing, ever climbing, to the heights beyond. Here and there small lakes sparkled in the bright sunlight. Mountain ranges, clothed with the richest greens, stretched away to be lost in a bluish dimness on the far-distant horizon.

Gray began to wonder what the new life was to have in store for him. He already realized that it would be totally unlike anything he had ever experienced. The old family doctor nad ordered him to the Adirondacks, suggesting Lake Pleasant in the memory of a hunting trip in that region some years before. Gray needed to follow the simple life, said the physician, keeping regular hours with plenty of sleep, away from the rush, excitement and worry of New York. Gray was forbidden to return to the city for a year. In the beginning he had rebelled, asking for Switzerland or some of the fashionable European watering places. But the old doctor had prescribed; and while the pill was bitter to Gray at first, it had to be taken.

He had passed within a few miles of the Adirondacks many times on various motor trips from the city, but had never thought it

worth while to stop in the Great North Woods. The pure, crisp mountain air encouraged him to square his shoulders and breathe deeply. Gray noted with gratitude that the driver was keeping his promise not to talk his passenger to death. Not until they had passed through the old covered bridge just beyond the village of Wells did Slim Joe venture a word, and then he spoke only in laconic scraps.

In a little while Joe, anticipating Gray's encouragement, began to be more loquacious, sketching a few of the historical happenings in the vicinity of Elbow Creek, along which their car was then passing. Slim Joe was an enthusiastic Baedecker of the region.

"This is the old Injun trail," he explained. "It leads down from their clearin's south of Injun Lake an' west of Whittaker. You mightn't b'lieve it, but these here hills was once alive with 'em. There was trails everywhere, most 's many as there is deer runways."

"What tribes were they?" asked Gray, assuming an interest that seemed to be expected of him.

"Don't jest recall 'em all. I rec'lect my gran'pap talkin' 'bout the Iroquois an' the Algonquins an' the other tribes that swarmed 'round here, first comin' from the south an' then from the north. 'Twas this-a-way—the Montagnais Injuns come all the way from the lower St. Lawrence. Their food 'd give out

sometimes—I mean their packs o' dried fish an' ven'son—an' then they'd have to eat the buds an' bark off 'n the trees. So their enemies called 'em the 'tree-eaters' which is what the word 'Adirondacks' means in their own tongue. Funny things, names, ain't they? The Oneidas an' Onondagas was longest in this here region, an' it was one o' them tribes as named Orendaga. Means 'Land of Enchantment.' Everybody says it's named right—I ain't never seen none that didn't."

Slim Joe bent upon Gray a look seeking confirmation of his own opinion of the region, but the car's other passenger vouchsafed only a disinterested nod which effectively cooled Joe's enthusiasm for some distance.

Higher up they skirted Charlie and Gilman Lakes, which Slim Joe declared were alive with bullheads and pickerel. Up, up they climbed, until the driver announced that they had reached the highest point on the ridge, two thousand feet above sea level.

"Got to let her cool," said Joe, "now that we're on top. They don't all get up this far—usually get stuck on that last grade, but this tub ain't failed me once since I bought 'er."

Gray got out of the car. Looking out over the valley at his feet, he saw the soft greens of the nearby forest. Slightly, very slightly—almost imperceptibly—he began to grasp the romance suggested in the color of the distant

hills. Lake Pleasant, sparkling through the evergreens, lay as peacefully as a star in the sky at night.

"Beautiful," said Gray softly, more to himself than to his companion. "I never imagined the Adirondacks could be as beautiful as this."

"That's the Bearfoot Inn," interrupted Joe, pointing to a building with wide porches, picturesquely located on a hill amid the pines, some distance below the ridge on which the two men were standing. "You c'n git 's meals down thar's anywhere in these mountains. I've done it piles o' times, an' I know what I'm talking about. Uncle David owns it, but Mattie runs it, an' she, let me tell you, is the smartest gal in the hills, 'ceptin' my Jane."

Gray smiled with an amused curl at the corners of his lips at Joe's testimonial.

"Evidently a mutual admiration society in these hills," he thought to himself. "The Inn does look inviting," he said aloud, without much enthusiasm, however.

After Joe had started the "tub" again a silence prevailed for some distance. But Slim Joe found himself unable to remain speechless for long.

"Goin' after trout, are yuh?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. Anything to be out in the open with something to keep me busy."

"Well, y'll keep busy all right; there's piles to do up here, an' y'll find it," prophesied the

driver. "You git a good guide, go back into the woods, an' I'll bet if yuh stay six months yer folks won't know yer an' yuh won't know yerself."

Gray continued to remain silent.

"I'll drive yuh up to Rob Stevens' store up to the corners; that's whar y'll find the guides that ain't workin', an' Rob c'n pick one of 'em out for yuh. Rob'll fix up yer supplies, too."

"That sounds good," Gray finally admitted. "Let's drive up there."

Orendaga, into which the men were just driving, is in two parts, half on the lake shore and the rest at the Four Corners. The general stores, one of which harbored the usual country post office, a blacksmith's shop, and a little white church located on rising ground so that it could be seen from every direction, made up the small community. A number of neat, plain frame dwellings, clustered about the stores and church, housed the village's few inhabitants. The Bearfoot Inn guarded the south entrance to Orendaga, overlooking the lake and giving a free view of the surrounding mountains.

"That there road," observed Joe, "goes up into th' West Canada lake country. After yuh cross that mountain yuh'll git right into the midst o' the wilderness. It's either over there or up the Kun-ja-muck whar yuh'll git yer

health agin. I've seen a heap o' men come up here, dyin' with city fever, nerves, a punctured heart, or somethin'. They thought they know'd a pile, but they was like fools a-chasin' butterflies, if yuh'll 'scuse my sayin' so. Us Adirondack folks is coarse an' rough, but we live all right. We ain't rich, but we got good appetites. Our clo'es ain't much, anythin' to cover our hides, an' the home we like best is a shanty in the woods."

He paused and looked at Gray.

"I guess you'll git used to it," he concluded. "Most of 'em do."

By this time they had reached Rob Stevens' store. Joe drove the car alongside a little white building and stopped.

"This here's the place I told yuh 'bout," he said. "Come inside an' I'll ask Rob to fit yuh out."

It was a typical country store. Groceries, dry goods, boots and shoes, drugs and notions lined the unpainted board shelves. An arch which led to an adjoining room served as the ice-cream parlor, and across from it was the candy counter. Spruce gum, postal cards and balsam pillows were prominently displayed.

The afternoon was growing very cool, almost sharp. Several men of the village, among them a guide or two, were sitting around the big stove talking as they had been wont to do in the cold months of winter.

"Hello, Rob!" called Joe to the storekeeper, who was at the moment busy. "Here's a man wants to see yuh when yer through with that customer."

Before Gray had had time to do more than give a sweeping glance around the store, Stevens approached.

"My name is Gray," he said as he took Stevens' outstretched hand. "I am here for a few months' vacation, and I understand you can find me a guide and furnish me with supplies. I don't care when I go, where I go, or how long I stay."

Stevens laughed good-naturedly.

"I guess we can arrange things all right for you, Mr. Gray," he said. "You'll like it here after you get the soft spots knocked off and the hard ones put on. You'd better put up at the Bearfoot Inn to-night; they'll make you comfortable down there."

With a hurried excuse, Stevens turned away to serve a waiting customer, leaving Gray to look about him. The guides who were seated around the stove had apparently not seen him enter, and gave no evidences of interest in the conversation between him and Stevens. They were discussing something with considerable animation, and Gray, after studying them a moment from a distance, began to wonder which one Stevens would select for him as a guide. There was a sudden lull in the talk,

then a question was slowly asked by one of the guides.

"What d'yuh think of him, Blake?"

For a moment Gray thought the question referred to himself, and he flushed slightly, hardly knowing how to take it. In the silence that followed Gray slowly realized that the men were not talking about him, as no eye was raised to his embarrassed face. Then the man called Blake, a tall, broad-shouldered, keen-looking lumberjack and guide, made answer.

"He's a strange bein', but anybody livin' in sech a myster'ous place 'ud nat'rally be called a hermit, even if he wa'n't one. I wouldn't b'lieve all I heard 'bout him, an' it ain't fair t' think s'piciously o' them as comes int' th' woods an' minds their own business."

There was something magnetic, something compelling in Blake's personality—a sincerity and manly good sense that attracted Gray immediately. He felt that underneath Blake's quiet words lay a mystery, a problem which had, apparently, been the chief topic for discussion at the store for a long time.

Gray wondered just who this "strange being" was, where he had come from, what he was doing in the woods, and, more especially, why he should be a mystery to these guides and woodsmen who knew every foot of the country and all its inhabitants for miles around.

Gray was standing in deep thought. The mysterious man of the woods had gripped his imagination. Joe spoke but Gray did not hear. The driver then touched his arm.

"I'll show yuh t' th' Bearfoot Inn an' then push on t' Northville," he said.

Gray followed, but his mind was held by the mysterious one of the Great North Woods.

# CHAPTER II

## THE GRIP OF THE ORENDAGA GUIDES

I sought for Peace, but could not find;
I sought it in the city,
But they were of another mind,—
The more's the pity.
I sought for Peace of country swain,
But yet I could not find;
So I, returning home again,
Left Peace behind.
Sweet Peace, where dost thou dwell? said I:—
Methought a voice was given,
"Peace dwelt not here, long since did fly
To God in heaven."
Thought I, this echo is but vain,
To folly 'tis of kin;
Anon, I heard it tell me plain,
'Twas killed by sin.
Then I believed the former voice,
And rested well content;
Lay down and slept, rose, did rejoice,
And then to heaven went.
Then I enquired for Peace, and found it true:—
An heavenly plant it was, and sweetly grew.

ENTERING the combined office and living room of the Bearfoot Inn, Gray was welcomed by a cheerful blaze in the great stone fireplace which occupied one side of the room. He paused for a moment and looked about him, marvelling at what he saw.

Rustic chairs of white and silver birch, placed beside rough tables of the same ma-

terial, gleamed in the fire light. On each side of the cobblestone chimney was a majestic deer head, while a red squirrel, sitting on its haunches with a nut in its paws, gazed steadfastly at several other specimens of the taxidermist's art which were scattered about the room on shelves and tables. An open checkerboard, suggestive of the good fellowship to be found among the rough woodsmen of the neighborhood, lay on a table near the window.

Gray moved over to a large armchair of red cedar which faced the fire, and then sat there studying his surroundings. His eye fell on several balsam pillows which lay on the couch and he suddenly became aware of the subtle fragrance of the dried balsam needles, a fragrance which gave him a foretaste of what he might find in the heart of the woods. The beams over his head retained their bark, and had been preserved by creosote and varnish, thus bringing out the color and beauty of the different kinds of timber used. The walls were finished with rough pine boards half way to the ceiling. Above this wainscoting was a shelf running entirely around the room, the wall above the shelf being covered with red burlap. The shelf itself did not contain the usual collection of china plates, vases and steins. On it were curios from the woods, and Indian relics picked up along the old military highway and about the now decaying forts.

Several fungus growths of remarkable size and color were fastened to the wall at various spots, a hornets' nest hung from one corner of the room, and a birds' nest, still fastened to the branch of a tree, occupied another corner.

Gray had travelled extensively. He had seen the beautiful, had been charmed by the old colonial or mission furniture of luxurious hotels. But, sitting before the fire in the Bearfoot Inn, he thought, and was surprised to find himself thinking, that his surroundings at the moment were the most unique, inexpensive, and interesting he had ever seen. The room was new, yet old; crude, yet wonderful.

The new guest began to question where the host, Uncle David, of whom he had already been told, was. In a moment, however, his mind had unconsciously reverted to the scenes and happenings of the day. Warmed by the heat of the fire, his senses lulled into reminiscence by the odor of the pine and balsam, Gray mentally reviewed his departure from the city, his arrival at Northville, Joe's kindness and his delightful family. He saw again the hills, and a half-smile crossed his face as he remembered Joe's words about the "Land of Enchantment."

So intent was he upon his thoughts that he did not hear another person's entrance into the room. Gray sat with his eyes fixed dreamily on the fire, until roused by a voice.

"Good evening, sir. I hope you are comfortable, and that you have made yourself at home."

Gray started, raising his eyes to the speaker quickly.

"I am very much at home," he stammered. "The beauty and restfulness of this room would quiet the nerves of any worn-out person."

"Glad to hear you say so," returned the other. "That is just what the Bearfoot Inn is here to do. It has given shelter to many a discouraged man, and hundreds who have found the journey of life hard have come here to learn the lessons that only the woods and hills can teach."

Gray gave the speaker an intent look.

"This must be Uncle David," he thought to himself. "He talks just as I would expect him to, after Joe's description of him."

"Will you remain over night, sir?" asked Uncle David, having confirmed, by his sympathetic remarks, Gray's conjecture as to his identity.

"I should like to," replied Gray, "if you have room for me."

"Number four is on the south side, gets the morning sun, and has a fireplace. Take it, sir, and use it as your own. Supper will be served at six o'clock. The Inn is well filled with guides and men from the cities, most of

whom are preparing to go into the woods after trout. Our woodland streams are filled with fish, you know. If you'd like to learn more about this region before continuing your journey, come into the Fishermen's Room this evening. The guides, who usually gather there after supper, will be glad to tell you all you wish to know."

"That's just what I want. I'm from the city, and this is my first visit to the Adirondacks. I'm frightfully ignorant as to the pleasures to be found here. My doctor told me that the Adirondack Park would be a good place to come to sleep and to get back the old time vigor."

Uncle David laughed heartily at Gray's reference to "a good place to sleep."

"You can sleep, my friend, to your heart's content. After you are well rested you'll find plenty to keep you busy, and here you will learn to live."

"I expected to die of loneliness, at least; so, fearing that I might become another Rip Van Winkle, I have already gotten some of my supplies and have inquired about a guide to take me into the West Canada lake region. This four-corner village and homelike Inn interest me, and it's hard to say just how long I may want to stay around here."

Gray did not fully realize that the real tie binding him to the village was his interest in

the mysterious being whom he had heard discussed in Stevens' store that afternoon. Every few minutes since his arrival at the Inn, his mind had returned to the guides' talk. He had not stopped to think about the matter deeply, but there was something about the story of the hermit, something elusive which appealed to Gray's jaded senses. His tired and overworked mind grasped at this mystery as a relief from the thoughts of the restless, feverish life of which he had been in the midst no longer ago than yesterday. He had already half determined to investigate the mystery further, and it was with this purpose that he announced his intention of remaining a little while longer at Orendaga.

After an appetizing supper, of which Gray partook with a zest quite new to him, he went into the Fishermen's Room where the guides were congregating for their evening smoke. This room, the men's favorite retreat, was as original in its decorations as the one Gray had already seen.

Fishing rods, pictures of record catches, and mounted specimens covered the walls. Here the guides talked and smoked, old ones telling younger and less experienced woodsmen stories of the forest. Guide, lumberjack, woodsman —the terms are synonymous when applied to these men who had followed the woods, hunting, trapping, felling trees and lumbering on

the rivers or at the mills. The knowledge of the country picked up in this way made them the best of guides, and every last man of them could cook as wholesome and tasty a meal as the most accomplished chef.

Their conversation opened with a few trivial remarks concerning the happenings of the day. Gray sat quietly at one side of the room, eagerly listening for some further reference to the man of mystery. Gradually the talk turned on politics and world affairs, Gray being drawn into the discussion when several questions were asked him by one or two of the men he had met at the supper table. He spoke naturally, quietly, but with an air of knowledge of what he was talking about. He soon realized that these men had no very deep interest in world problems or politics, but that their real interest was in the peacefulness and pleasure of the wilderness, away from the perplexities which overshadowed city life. They were ready to do their share for the state and nation, but their love for the hills and the care-free, outdoor life made them happy and contented amid the Adirondack wilds.

Soon the men lapsed into the lore of the woods, the one topic of which they never tired and to which they always turned sooner or later. Gray once more became the silent listener, as the experiences which he heard related were entirely new to him. Hunting and fishing

stories followed one upon another, but the story for which Gray had been hoping failed to materialize. He had almost decided to go to bed, when his attention was caught by a young guide named Milt Boyd, who spoke up for the first time during the evening.

"You c'n talk 'bout your catches of fish an' bags of game, but as Cal was sayin' in the store this afternoon, the biggest thing we can catch 'round here is that man of the Kun-ja-muck Cave."

Gray leaned a little forward, his whole body tingling with excitement. He was anxious to hear and to remember every word spoken, for he realized that this was his opportunity to ask questions of the guides concerning the man of whom so little was known. As they began to warm up to the story of the mystery, Gray decided to keep silent until he had heard all they had to say about the matter.

Isaiah Pikes, a middle-aged man and one of the best guides of the Orendaga region, replied to Boyd.

"You're right, Milt. That feller's been in this region ten years, an' there ain't one of us as has ever seen him or as knows anythin' 'bout him, except that he lives in or near the Kun-ja-muck Cave. There's only one way to get him—use the right kind of bait an' keep after him 'til he's landed. There ain't a fish in any lake or river 'round these parts that us guides

can't catch. We know all their tricks an' what they like best. Same with our guns—every last one's got a different kick but we c'n manage to hit the mark with 'em every time. What we've got to do is to study the habits of that mysterious man an' not let him slip through our fingers any longer. We don't need to be told that he's shrewd an' cautious, an' fleeter 'n a deer. He knows the woods an' caves better 'n any of us who're born woodsmen."

"Them's jest the reasons why I think we'd better make his acquaintance," observed Milt with a grin. "He c'n teach us a thing or two, even though we be Orendaga guides. Why should we fellers who know the woods give him up? I say let's have him at any cost."

Charlie Miller, another of the guides who had been an interested listener, broke into the conversation with, "I've gone up and down th' Kun-ja-muck for five years, fr'm th' Oregon country t' th' Sacandaga, an' fr'm th' Lewey Lake road t' Fox Lair, but I've never seen that man or heard a sound anywhere t' make me think he was near."

Turning to Harold Randall, his companion of many a hunting expedition, Charlie continued, "You remember, Harold, how we went up t' that cave two years ago an' found a fire burnin'?" Again facing the circle of woodsmen, he went on, "We paddled in quiet-like, an' left the canoe at Long Point. We'd seen

smoke curlin' up from the hillside as we turned the big bend, an' we knew it was from the cave or nearby. Didn't make no noise, an' thought sure we could surprise him, but when we got up to the fire there wa'n't a soul anywhere 'round. We kept the fire goin' but he didn't come back, an' after three hours o' waitin' we slid out."

"Well, we're pretty sure he's made the cave his home fer th' last three years or so," broke in Cal Wilks, one of the group who were listening attentively to Milt and Charlie.

"I'd like to see anybody git within shot of him," replied Harold Randall.

Stevens, the storekeeper, who had dropped in to have a smoke with the boys after putting up the shutters for the night, then gave his opinion of the mysterious dweller in Kun-ja-muck Cave. "We all know this strange bein' exists. The things we've found up at the cave show that he sleeps there once in a while, an' eats there sometimes. Looks like he had a companion, too, 'cause there's always two bunks all made up. He gets his supplies 'thout visitin' th' village, so he must have some way of communication with the outside world that we don't know 'bout."

"Men," interrupted Cal Wilks, "what do you think of Louie Lamont, the trapper that lives 'bout six miles north of the cave? Louie may be the friend of this strange man—maybe

he gets his supplies. You remember, don't you, Stevens, how we tried to get the trapper to talk about this inhabitant of the Kun-ja-muck Cave? Louie used to come down with his furs, but he'd never say anything—just give that funny grunt of his, 'Ugh,' like an Injun. When Louie grunts like that he allers means 'I know, but I won't tell.' "

"Well," said Isaiah Pikes, "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if Louie an' that mysterious man had somethin' t' do with each other. Louie's 'bout as mysterious as this other feller, though. When he come t' these woods twenty years ago nobody saw him come, an' we ain't learned much 'bout him since. I, for one, can't see why he stays buried in th' woods except fer one visit t' th' village every year, 'bout the last o' January, when he brings his furs in. It's funny th' way he acts on them visits, too. Sells his furs, buys his supplies an' makes sure of everything he needs t' last him th' whole year. Then he spends every cent he has left fer whiskey, 'cept the money he gives t' th' kids in th' village."

"He's a queer man, all right," said Stevens. "Generous, silent, best trapper I've ever seen. But he sure can drink an' swear when th' mood's on him."

The guides sat back and laughed at their recollections of Louie's strange behaviour on his annual visits to the village.

"Ain't it a wonder th' way Louie's changed since he first come t' th' woods?" asked Isaiah Pikes. "When he first come into town with his furs, many years ago, his face was hard as stone, and he looked more like an animal than a man. Us'd t' drink to the limit, too, just like a beast. But lately, 'specially the last five years or so, he's changed more 'n anybody I ever saw. He don't seem to be so selfish an' always tries to help other people, in his rough way, 'fore he helps himself."

"Prob'ly he was born with that cravin' fer whiskey," said Rob Stevens, "an' I've noticed, too, that he's gittin' over it little by little."

Rob paused for a moment to relight his pipe, then turned to Elmer Page.

"How long've you been clerkin' in our store, Elmer?"

" 'Bout twelve years."

"Ever notice any difference in the quantity o' Louie's orders?"

"Sure," Elmer replied. "You remember how we talked it over 'most five years ago after Louie went back into th' woods. He brought in twice 's many furs that time as ever before, an' bought twice 's much stuff t' take back with him, before goin' on his usual spree. That was th' first time we noticed a brighter look on his face. His clothes were in better condition, too, cleaner an' neater, th' patches was all sewed on straight an' the buttons all on."

"That proves Louie's feedin' somebody 'sides himself," said Isaiah. "Must be th' man in th' cave."

"Guess you're right," said Rob. "I do remember th' changes in Louie's face an' clothes, now that yuh mention 'em. Yuh know he always packs his load, fastens the canvas over it, an' leaves his sled in my barn while he's down to Mike's Temperance Parlor drinkin'. Last few years I've noticed he always trembled 'fore he starts fer the bootleg shop, an' when he takes his first glass his hand shakes like a leaf."

Jack Blake, the woodsman who had caught Gray's attention in Stevens' store that afternoon, had sat quietly by the fire all the evening, listening to the conversation without taking any part in it. Gray had looked at him many times, sizing him up as the most intelligent man among those present. Blake had a strong, bold face, kindly eyes, a high forehead, and showed great mental as well as physical strength. He was known throughout the region as a master woodsman. He knew men, their strong points and their weak ones, but was a friend to all.

He had been listening with considerable interest, at times watching the expression on the eager and anxious face of the newcomer, Gray. Blake now spoke for the first time, commanding the respectful attention of everyone.

"I've seen Louie on his drunken sprees year

after year, an' I've noticed three things that've happened on his visits t' Orendaga. He only gives way t' his cravin' once a year, on his trip t' th' village, 'cause he don't take no liquor back with him. When he does start t' drink, he clears th' decks an' lets everythin' go—lets go his grip on himself 'til his body can't stand no more. An' all th' time he's on his spree he don't speak to a soul 'ceptin' th' kids he passes on their way t' school. He even watches fer 'em, an' hands a nickel or a dime t' each one of 'em. Sometimes he gives fifty cents or a dollar t' th' poorest kids.

"Louie acts kind o' mean t' us when he's drunk, but anybody c'n see what his heart's really like by watchin' his kindness t' them boys an' girls. He don't like t' have older people see him when he gives that money away, but I've happened t' see him a couple o' times. An' th' las' two years that Frenchman's been a lot diff'rent. He's been more int'rested in everybody, even if he ain't stopped drinkin' alt'gether. Th' rough 'pearance o' that man covers a beastly cravin' an' a tenderness an' affection that's near childlike."

"D'yuh ever notice, Jack, there ain't a child in th' village, boy or girl, that's afeared o' him?" asked one of the guides.

"Yep," replied Blake, "I've seen more 'n one kid, even some o' them that's poorest, stop an' give Louie some o' th' food out o' their din-

ner pails. Some of 'em needed th' food their-sel's too."

"I've follered him a few times," continued Blake, "after he's spent all his money an' started fer th' woods agin. Early in th' mornin' when there wa'n't nobody else 'round, he'd slip out'n his room here in th' Inn, go out t' my barn where his sled was, an' start his journey int' th' hills alone. 'Twa'n't no longer 'go then las' winter I helped him pull his load over th' hill up yonder. I kind o' feared that after drinkin' fer five days straight he might be so numbed in his senses that he'd fall down 'side th' trail, an' mebbe freeze t' death. Waal, after we got over th' hill I stopped an' looked at him. I says 'Good-bye, Louie.' He straightened up like a soldier, faced me fer a minute, an' says slowlike, 'Louie fool, beeg fool. Come t' town no more. Louie ver' beeg fool.' Then he turned and plodded off through th' snow an' th' dreary woods, back t' th' place he called home."

Blake became silent for a moment, then turned to Gray.

"I hear yer up in this country fer a rest, t' go trout fishin', an want t' go up t' th' West Canada lake region."

"That was my intention when I arrived here to-day," replied Gray, "and I have already spoken to Mr. Stevens about a guide and supplies for my trip. As yet I have made no de-

cision about a guide. Since hearing about this peculiar French-Canadian, Louie Lamont, I have thought that he might be engaged for a few months."

"You see, I'm not in very good condition," he went on, "and will need someone to do a large part of the hard work. I'd go considerably out of my way, and to almost any expense, to get Louie Lamont as my guide."

The men were very much amused at Gray's words, for their knowledge of Louie and his habits made the idea of his becoming a guide impossible.

"Yuh c'n go t' Louie's cabin, but he'll never leave his traps an' pets, in my opinion," said Blake. "Some men git a better welcome'n others. Sometimes Louie'll talk, an' sometimes he won't say more 'n a couple o' grunts."

Isaiah Pikes affirmed the truth of Blake's statement, telling of several men who, in the past, had tried to buy Louie's hospitality.

"Twa'n't no use, though," he finished. "Th' more them fellers offered, th' less Louie liked 'em."

Gray expressed a desire to know more about Louie's character and habits, and instinctively turned to Blake for answer.

"Waal," said Blake, slowly, "Louie'll look a stranger plumb in th' face fer a minute, an' then he's either his friend, or he ain't. There ain't no trick'ry with Louie, an' everybody

gits a square deal. That trapper's got an instinct like an animal—either trusts yuh or he don't, right off."

"Blake's right," called out Rob. "We can't give yuh any idee o' how t' git next t' Louie. He'll take yuh on yer face value."

"Do you think," asked Gray, "that he'd come with me for a few weeks if I don't ask too many questions?"

"No way o' tellin'," was the reply. "All yuh c'n do is to try it out. But Louie Lamont's worth all the attention any man'll give him. So far there ain't any of us that's been able t' help him, not even Uncle David."

"Does he live absolutely alone?" was Gray's next question.

" 'Ceptin' fer his pets. Got a tame deer, 'coon, crow, an' his dog, 'sides a few others."

"Includin' th' man o' th' Kun-ja-muck Cave," added Cal Wilks.

Isaiah Pikes chuckled at this, and said to Gray, with a smile, " 'F yuh've come t' hunt an' fish, Mr. Gray, why not fish fer Louie Lamont, an' try t' find out 'bout th' myst'ry o' th' cave?"

Jack Blake, who had been talking in a low voice with one or two other men, now rose and addressed Gray.

"We'll give yuh th' secret grip o' th' Orendaga guides, Mr. Gray, won't we, boys, if yuh succeed in solvin' this myst'ry fer us. We

think maybe yuh c'n do it, seein' as all of us have failed, an' if yuh do yuh'll be one of us fer life. Ain't that right, boys?"

A chorus of approbation greeted Blake's proposal. These men, crude, in many ways, were yet warm-hearted, and never hesitated to admit to their closest friendship a stranger, once he had proved himself a real man. Gray had impressed them very favorably, and they were now eager to see what he would do toward solving the Kun-ja-muck mystery.

"This, gentlemen," said Gray, "is an honor I little deserve. I am a stranger to you, and to be admitted into the inner circle of the Orendaga guides is worth a hard struggle on my part. I fully realize that. I want to get to the very bottom of this mystery, but, as you see, I am not in much condition to undertake it and fear that my efforts may result in failure."

"We're with yuh, Mr. Gray, fr'm first t' last," said Blake, speaking slowly, as though measuring each word and sealing it with a solemn pledge.

"It's a bargain, then," replied Gray. "I am yours for service in behalf of Louie Lamont, and to help you discover the mystery of Kun-ja-muck Cave."

Blake was the first to grasp Gray's hand, every man present following.

When he had shaken hands with all, Gray walked slowly to his room. He felt refreshed,

renewed. There was opened to him a new vista of life, something of which he had never before dreamed, and he went to sleep with a feeling of contentment.

# CHAPTER III

## MATTIE O'NEIL OF THE BEARFOOT INN

I saw a smile—to a poor man 'twas given,
And he was old.
The sun broke forth; I saw that smile in heaven
Wrought into gold.
Gold of such lustre never was vouchsafed to us;
It made the very light of day more luminous.

I saw a toiling woman sinking down,
Footsore and cold.
A soft hand covered her—the humble gown,
Wrought into gold,
Grew straight imperishable, and will be shown
To smiling angels gathered 'round the judgment throne.

Wrought into gold! We that pass down life's hours
So carelessly
Might make the dusty path a path of flowers
If we would try.
Then every gentle deed we've done, or kind word given,
Wrought into gold, would make us wondrous rich in heaven.

THE following morning Gray awoke as the sun first gleamed in a shining golden mist through the pines and balsams clustered thickly about the Bearfoot Inn. He dressed slowly, getting into some old golf knickers and a flannel shirt; and, as he recalled the conversation and pledge of the evening before, the whole thing seemed more like a dream than a reality. Such a simple and naive enthusiasm

as Gray felt for his proposed undertaking did not seem quite natural to him. He wondered vaguely if he were a fool; yet, he was strangely content.

It is almost incredible, but none the less true, that nervous tension, however high it may be, soon gives way to tranquillity before the wide quiet of the pine woods. One quickly becomes adjusted to the calmness of a country-side like Orendaga. Gray was very tired still, and knew a physical lassitude that kept from his mind any thoughts of setting out on his journey before several days of rest.

Standing at his window, hands plunged deep in his pockets, he aimlessly watched the birds flitting about from tree to tree. Soon he found himself whistling, calling to mind pleasing old tunes that he had not thought of for many years. The deep peace that hallowed the atmosphere swept over him like a breath.

After dressing, he went slowly down to the dining room of the Inn. The waitress, an attractive, bright-looking girl whom he had not seen the evening before, greeted him with a friendly smile and a cheery "Good morning!" There was a latent merriment in her eyes and a refined dignity of manner about her as she set before him a tempting platter of fragrant ham, surrounded by eggs, the yolks of which lay as great golden jewels in white settings.

"My appetite has grown enormously, for

only one day in the woods; I am quite surprised," he said.

"But you're not yet in the woods," retorted the young woman. "Orendaga is a village, and the Bearfoot Inn is at the very heart of civilization."

Gray smiled at her enthusiasm.

"You, no doubt, are better informed than I," he said, "so I shall sit corrected."

She gave him a quick look before speaking again.

"Go into West Canada Lake or the Brook Trout region," said she, "or along the Indian River—then you can talk about the woods. In there, or up the Kun-ja-muck, you'll find a real appetite. What you now have is only a symptom."

"Don't say that, Miss——"

She stood still and smiled.

"Would you feel more at home if I told you my name?" she queried.

"It's the only thing that is lacking," he laughingly responded.

"My name is O'Neil," said the girl, "but you may call me simply Mattie. 'Mattie of the Bearfoot Inn' is what most of the woodsmen call me."

There was nothing in her manner that betrayed a desire for familiarity. Hers was an open frankness and wholesome good-will. The fact that Mattie O'Neil was a waitress was

not emphasized in Gray's mind. It seemed quite a matter of course that they should converse while they were alone in the room. All the guides and other guests of the Inn had finished breakfast before Gray came down.

"The man who drove me up here yesterday spoke of you," replied Gray. "In fact, you were the climax of his introductions from the top of Inspiration Point. He also told me of your hospitality, and I am very certain he under-rated it."

Mattie flushed prettily, replying, "I wish it were possible for us to live up to Joe's introductions, Mr. Gray, but he is very apt to be extravagant in his praise."

On leaving the table Gray laid, mechanically enough, a fee beside his plate. He sauntered over to the fireplace, and while his back was turned to Mattie O'Neil, he heard her call his name. He looked over his shoulder, and saw that she was standing at his table.

"You have forgotten something," she said, picking up the money and walking toward him, with a twinkle of mischief in her eye.

Byron Gray felt very much embarrassed. "I —I left—that, as a tip, you know," he explained lamely. Could it be possible, he wondered, that she had never received any before this? "In New York—" he began to add.

"But you are not in New York now," reminded Mattie, firmly and gave him the coin.

"I told you, Mr. Gray, that Orendaga is the heart of civilization. We do not receive tips here. The Bearfoot Inn is not a charitable organization, and I—am not—a beggar."

"I shall keep this," said Gray quietly, "as a curiosity. I have travelled many miles, but never before have I seen a tip refused."

"It is a degrading custom," asserted Mattie O'Neil, "and has no foundation worth while. The giver gives for vanity, or social pressure,—and to the receiver—it is a debasing charity, Mr. Gray."

The quiet firmness of the girl impressed him. He wondered if she had read Carlyle. He studied her anew with a random glance, and saw in her face a strength and magnificence he had noticed in portraits of wonderful Colonial women, guiding influences of our pioneer days, whose subtle courage, though unchronicled, has been the inspiration of patriot and soldier. "I agree with you," he said, "but we do it as we do many things—through 'social pressure.'" With a quaint gesture, she left him, disappearing into the kitchen.

Gray wandered out to the wide porches, facing westward, and seated himself on one of the long wooden benches. Lake Pleasant lay rippling in the sunlight, its wavelets refracting brilliant patches of sheer radiance. Occasionally a fish would jump above the surface of the

lake, attracting sudden attention because of its flash and the swish of its return to the water.

A dreamy gared of dreamy mountains lay beyond, rising behind the dark line of evergreens marking the water's edge, and fading into the mists of the horizon. A blending of blue and gold and whiteness seemed to cast about these hills a mystic loveliness, delicate and haunting. Here, Gray reflected, was no such rugged, colossal moulding as in the Rockies, or majesty such as cloaked the Alps with their glaciers and snows,—but rather a tender charm prevailed with the misting of lapis lazuli and the amber light from the heavens.

An island lay midway of the lake, its spruces and pines giving it the aspect of some low-towered, heavily buttressed cathedral, its deep and shadowy greens silhouetted against the turquoise of Turtle Mountain. Rising from the lake, which stretched for miles, a wide silver floor, it stirred the fancy to poetic and idyllic imagining, serene and peaceful. Now and then a cloud would form, and would float away, resting from time to time amid the evergreens of a mountain-side.

Gray rose lazily and descended the steps leading out upon the wide sand beach that stretched along the east shore of the lake. He was whistling, without being conscious of it,

Nevin's "Narcissus," and as he ploughed along through sand up to his ankles, he felt singularly at peace with the world, and oddly, blissfully at ease. How strange that he had not been here before! It was less than a day's journey from New York. He gazed again down the water, dreamily, to where the far hills beckoned, like the blessed isles of a Homeni fancy, and realized that inevitably the old Byron Gray, the cynic of rickety nerves and caustic tongue was soon to disappear, like a dream of the night. He tried to analyse his reaction psychologically, but gave it up, since the prevailing mood of nature did not inspire such mechanical introspection.

He had come to the Adirondacks thinking only of himself. To get back his health, have as good a time as he could, go back to fight the battle all over again—that had been his only idea. He now knew that his first idea was gone, never to return, for he had found something new, something which he liked and which he could not bear to think of leaving. He began to anticipate his stay in the Great North Woods with considerable pleasure, and not the discontent with which he had arrived. Before he realized it, his thoughts were upon the challenge he had accepted the evening before. Could he win out? This was the question uppermost in his mind.

"The woods!" he thought. "How different

from anything I have ever known before. This trackless forest, with trails but dimly marked, and unsafe for a tenderfoot—rivers—hundreds of lakes and rocky steeps—the eccentric old trapper—the mystery of the cave—all these make my undertaking seem almost beyond my strength, wisdom or training."

He resolved to start his quest as soon as he had become quite rested, and had gotten back some of his staying power.

Shouts of childish voices behind him caught Gray's ear, and he turned to see Mattie O'Neil just leaving the Inn with an eager group of happy children. Gray wondered where they were going. Soon a school bell began to fill the valley with reverberating echoes. Then Gray surmised that Mattie, perhaps, taught school. That would account for her manner and her good English. He had thought her unusual.

While he was looking back, shielding his eyes from the sun, a shout from the lake drew his attention. A canoe approached, with a figure in the stern which Gray recognized to be Jack Blake. He was dipping the paddle with a slow grace, though his stroke was vigorous. He waved to Gray in recognition, and in a moment the canoe grated on the sand.

"Been down th' Sacandaga," he stated, laconically, drawing the canoe up on the beach. "How yuh feelin' this mornin'?"

"Pretty well," replied Gray, "though I'm not very energetic yet."

"Yuh'll be feelin' great 'fore long," prophesied the guide. Then he noticed Mattie and the children, nearly out of sight down the road. "Met her yet?" he asked.

"At breakfast," was the answer. "Is she the school teacher, too?"

"Yep, an' I guess she's pretty bright. Th' kids all worship her."

"So I see," observed Gray. "I'm not surprised." Then, as an after-thought he continued, "She's Uncle David's daughter, I presume?"

" 'Dopted," said Blake, shortly. "Left in a basket one night, in th' livin' room o' th' Inn—Uncle David never locks up, yuh know. There was a couple o' letters 'bout her parents an' all that. Mother was a widder—"

Blake's voice died away into silence, Gray nodding with understanding. They walked toward the Inn without either man speaking.

"She's been a God-send t' this place," resumed Blake as they climbed the Inn steps. "Helps th' kids all kinds o' ways when their old man spends all his money down t' Mike's Temp'rance Parlor. 'Sides that, she's good 's a trained nurse when anybody gits sick."

"She's very attractive," suggested Gray.

"Waal—" said Blake, and then decided to say no more.

That afternoon Gray visited Mattie's school. He had been walking about Orendaga village, and happened to wander around to the school yard just as the children were out for recess. Perhaps there was more design than chance in his going. A score or so of happy children were running about in a game, joyously shouting and tagging each other after short, frantic spurts around the circle of players. Gray was standing watching them when Mattie appeared in the doorway to summon her youthful charges back to their books. Catching sight of Gray, she came down the steps.

"Perhaps you've never seen a country school in action," she invited.

"No, I haven't. My country experiences have never included school visiting," he answered. "I should like to very much, if I won't be a bother."

"If you won't make fun—"

Gray knew a moment of discomfiture. She had detected the cynic in him; he wondered how.

"No, indeed I shall not make fun," he replied.

Mattie tapped the small desk bell which she carried in her hand, and the shouts in the yard ceased quickly. The children divided into two lines, one of boys and the other of girls, and marched into the small two-roomed building to Mattie's count.

She led Gray through a narrow hall into her room, where there was a low hum of voices. Conducting Gray to the slightly raised platform at the front of the room, Mattie offered him a chair. Turning to the pupils, she began to speak, and they, seeming to know what was coming, listened attentively.

"Children," said Mattie, "this gentleman sitting here is Mr. Gray, from New York. He is a guest at the Inn, and has already proved himself a generous visitor. It is an honor to have him with us, and I am sure that Mr. Gray will talk to you for a few minutes, taking any helpful subject he may choose."

There was only one word emphasized in what Mattie said. It was "generous." The introduction found Gray completely surprised, and somewhat taken back. Mattie had lined him up quickly; he recognized the challenge and accepted it with a smile, for he was sure that Mattie had deliberately taken this means of testing his poise and ability. He did not know that every visitor to school was called upon to speak in this same way.

Gray briefly and tactfully explained the reason for his coming to Orendaga, saying that he was happy to be at the very center of civilization. This provoked a quickly suppressed smile from Mattie.

In closing, Gray said, "Miss O'Neil stated in her introduction that I was from New York,

I am—from the busiest part of New York, Wall Street. They call it the financial district, and the name of that street is of world-wide fame. Fortunes are made and lost in a day. It is there, and in similar places in the great cities that men become greedy, piling up wealth, sacrificing health, and shortening their lives simply because they do not loosen their grip on business. They think, as I did, that civilization is in the bosom of the great cities, in places of learning and great libraries, where men grind on, seeking constantly for more culture and wealth without giving thought to the highest things in life."

As Gray spoke the idea came to Mattie, and grew stronger as he continued, that he was not speaking to the children now, but to her.

"This is my second day in the great school of common sense," went on Gray, "and I am thankful for such a place of beauty and for such instructors as I am sure you will all be to me. I know that when I have returned to the city I will have learned many a lesson that will make me more useful to the world and able to enjoy life more fully."

When Gray sat down he wondered what had happened to him that he should speak as he had, with such a naive and simple enthusiasm. Where was the sophistry which it had always been his wont to employ? Where were the sarcasm and irony which he knew so well how

to pour out upon those who lived not according to his former standard?

Mattie interrupted this train of thought, asking him if he cared to stay until school was over. Gray replied in the affirmative, and took a chair at the rear of the room, while Mattie went ahead with the regular school routine.

The little school room was quiet save for a reading class which Mattie had called up to her desk—a half dozen, boys and girls, the latter with flaxen braids straight down their backs, and tied at the ends with bright but wrinkled ribbons. The boys were all arms and legs, nervously eager like young colts, but meek before their teacher. They read in quavering voices. The other pupils were busy at work, the younger ones writing in their copy-books, the older drawing maps which they colored with wax crayons.

Raising his eyes to inspect the room more closely, he saw blackboards, panelled between windows at various points around the room. They were very attractive with neat drawings, in white and colored chalk, here a column of figures, there a mountain flower outlined from root to petal. At the top of each board was a moral teaching printed in crayon, in the hope that its message might strike home to the hearts and minds of those who came there to school. Among them were such trite bits as "Be not simply good, be good for something,"

and Lincoln's saying: "A hero is the man who does his duty."

Soon the time for closing drew near, as the boys and girls began to put their books inside the mysterious caverns of the desks and to straighten their clothing, disarranged in the happy play of recess. All of the school hushed —for there had been an indistinct and pleasing hum before—while Mattie slowly rose. Then, as if with one voice, the children began to repeat:

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want —" a new meaning, laden with beauty, came to Gray and a deep emotion stirred him. He had not known how wonderful a poem that ancient psalm of David was. Its magnificent imagery was brought out by those childish voices in their slow, well trained repetition.

"He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul—"

These words released his imagination and sent him back to the morning in his walk along the beach, with the sand filling his shoes, the wind blowing through his hair, and the warm sun kissing everything with a golden halo.

"He restoreth my soul," said Byron Gray to himself, without the slightest thought of what the phrase really meant.

As school was dismissed, a wild burst of voices re-echoed through the air. Mattie turned to Gray. "Aren't they wonderful?"

she asked, with an emphasis of affection on the last word that gave it a deep significance. "They were very good to-day—sometimes they like mischief, but even that is fascinating." She smiled as if recalling some particular misdemeanor.

"I really did not think I could be as interested as I am," Gray confessed. Then he paused. "Honestly, I did not know schools were like this." Mattie had listened to his voice rather than his words, and understood the deep compliment intended.

"Oh, of course," she said, "they are if the teacher cares."

Then began a long conversation which ended in a discussion of educational method and theory, with Mattie condemning the wholesale factory standard system so apt to be found in cities and championing the country school with its opportunity for individual development. It began to grow late.

"You'd better not wait for me, Mr. Gray," finished Mattie. "I've some work still to do —a drawing to put on the board for to-morrow and some routine tasks, and I usually walk down with the other teacher, Miss Arnold."

So he left, a thousand thoughts stimulating his progress. At the four corners he met two of the older boys of the school. They were carrying a few packages, evidently having come from the store.

"Did you like our school?" asked the older, whom Gray knew to be the Tom Livingstone Mattie had mentioned at the Inn that morning. He was the orphaned son of an artist who had died of poverty and disease. The younger boy was his brother, Bill, an engaging lad in his early teens. Both had mild brown eyes and a frank, boyish winsomeness of manner.

"I certainly did," said Gray. "I begin to wish I had gone to a school like that." After he spoke, he was surprised at his assertion and the many implications which it suggested to his mind. He let it stand, however. "Do you boys live near here?" he asked.

"Why, not right here," replied Tom, pointing to a hill in the distance. "We live over yonder—it's a mile or so, I guess."

"It's pretty far, in winter," suggested Bill, looking at his brother.

"Oh yes," agreed Tom, "some days last winter we couldn't even get to school, it was so cold—and the snow drifted—"

"We even had to let our dog sleep under the stove," broke in Bill, turning his wide eyes toward Gray. "And Louie came too, and wouldn't even—"

"I guess he don't know about Louie," Tom admonished his brother, and went on to explain for Gray's benefit. "He's a trapper that lives way up the Kun-ja-muck, and he came to bring us presents. He's awfully good—"

"He wouldn't even come in to get warm," piped Bill, persistent in telling his story. "He just put the box in the door, and went. We called to him—"

"But he only said, 'Me Louie, good-bye,' and went right along," contributed Tom. "Some people think he's queer, but we all like him. He's French, you know."

Gray and the boys had been slowly walking along the country road.

"Do you know what he gave us?" Bill questioned. "Why, candy, and shirts, and boots —for both of us. Wasn't that good?" The boy cocked his head eagerly on one side, looking up at Gray's face as they walked.

"He must like you very much," said Gray, wondering what reply was expected.

"I guess he must," agreed Tom. "Well, we like him. He knows all about the woods, and he told us he had a pet bear—"

"And a pet skunk!" exclaimed Bill. "Did you ever see a pet skunk, Mr. Gray?"

Gray admitted that a pet of that order must be a rare curiosity. They came to a turn in the road where Bill suggested that Mr. Gray ought to stop. It was pretty far to their house, the boy stated.

"Louie's got pet snakes, too," interrupted Bill. "They come when he whistles t 'em!"

"That's right," Tom verified. "He told us so."

Gray said good-bye to the two lads, promising that it would not be long until he saw them again. Slowly he walked back to Orendaga, for he was rather wearied by the day's activities. Reaching the Inn, he went directly to his room and sank into a home-made Morris chair beside the window.

What a different world, he thought, from the one two hundred and fifty miles away! The city, wonderful as it was, could not really be as delightful as this. Here the doors were never locked, every man knew every other man in the neighborhood and distrusted few. Gray thought of all his ambitious dreams which had once seemed worth while, but which had turned out to be only disappointments and broken health. Looking backward to the old life, he saw that he had lacked something vital, a something which seemed to be present among the rough people who lived at Orendaga.

But his mind could not long be forgetful of the Kun-ja-muck mystery. Louie, Louie—everyone spoke of him. Some of the guides painted him as a cruel old pirate, crafty, merciless when angry, violent in hate. Others said Louie had no deceit in him, that he was straightforward. Mattie had described him as absolutely faithful to any trust he accepted; she told many instances of his generosity. The guides believed that he was entangled in the Kun-ja-muck mystery. Everyone agreed that

he avoided women, had no word of greeting for them when he met them, and, if possible, never went where he knew women to be. And the boys, Tom and Bill Livingstone, their voices betraying far more than their words, thought of him as a real man. What must the man be like?

# CHAPTER IV

## MUSIC BEGINS IN THE HEART

Thou must be true thyself
  If thou the truth wouldst teach;
Thy soul must overflow if thou
  Another's soul would reach;
It needs the overflow of heart
  To give the lips full speech.

Think truly and thy thoughts
  Shall the world's famine feed;
Speak truly, and each word of thine
  Shall be a fruitful seed;
Live truly, and thy life shall be
  A great and noble creed.

THAT evening the guides met again in the Fishermen's Room. Gray felt more at ease, for he had learned to know them all by name. He had been so engrossed in the story of Louie Lamont the evening before that he had not taken time to observe carefully those on whom he must depend most for information regarding the woods.

Cal Wilks was the first to light his pipe. He was a wiry little man, intelligent, and always looked one straight in the eye. Wilks was an excellent marksman, could bring down a partridge in the thick of the woods with rarely a miss, and possessed uncanny skill in hitting the bull's-eye. Rob Stevens had de-

scribed him at the store that afternoon as "a little man with a big heart."

Isaiah Pikes was there, as usual, settled down in his accustomed corner. He had spent the day on the Jessup River, just south of Indian Lake, and, tired by the long trip back to Orendaga, said little. That region was common ground to Isaiah, as he had kept a hunting lodge for years on the main road, the lodge being used as headquarters by groups of city men who came up in the Fall for the deer season. The buildings were made of rough logs, with great stone fireplaces inside. Pikes and his wife knew how to cook, and many men preferred this hospitable hunting lodge to the larger hotels in the vicinity.

Milt Boyd, fat and good natured, the wit and josher of the village, was also there. Milt was not much of a hunter, being rather too heavy on his feet. Every twig on which he stepped proclaimed his whereabouts with a loud snap. His greatest failing was his inability to keep silent, as a good hunter and guide should do, and he had a self-confessed love for eating that outweighed all other considerations with him.

Big Jack Blake was late in coming. With others, he had been loosening the log jam on the Sacandaga so that the high water might carry the pulp wood and pine down to the deeper waters of the Hudson.

Soon after Blake entered the room Milt Boyd turned to him with a quizzical look.

"Jack, when 'd yuh see Mattie last?" he asked.

"Can't yuh take care o' Mattie 'thout my help?" retorted the other pleasantly.

Milt led the merriment in which the men all joined.

Gray caught the meaning of the sally, and, looking at Blake, he knew that of all men, Jack Blake had the face, form, and character which would be most admired by Mattie.

While all the men gathered in the Fishermen's Room were strong as only woodsmen can be, and the sort of men anyone would be glad to have as friends, yet Jack Blake was the leader. Broad shoulders, round chest, the face of a real man—Gray tried to picture him as a back on a football team. Blake's daily occupation with its dangers, untangling log jams, climbing over great rocks, scaling cliffs, and working beside falling waters which rushed through narrow gorges and dropped to the depths below had made of Blake a strong, fearless man.

Gray marked him as his choice for a companion and confidential helper. With Blake's assistance, Gray believed he could work into the good graces of Louie Lamont and eventually solve the mystery of Kun-ja-muck Cave.

Gray's visit to the school became the topic

of discussion when Cal Wilks, the proud father of ten children, said, "My kids all come home fr'm school t'day an' tried t' tell me 'bout your goin' there. Couldn't git much news, 'count o' all on 'em talkin' 't once."

Blake seemed particularly interested in what Cal said, and the other guides eyed him with many a sly wink. They needed no one to tell them what was in Blake's mind. To their surprise, however, Blake was the first to express appreciation of Gray's interest in the community.

Milt Boyd saw another chance for a dig at Blake.

"Better practice up on yer fiddle, Blakie! Then yuh c'n go t' school with Mr. Gray."

"Waal," drawled Blake, "I don't know anybody I'd ruther be with 'n Mattie,' 'n Mr. Gray, 'n th' kids."

Gray explained how he happened to visit the school, describing the children and the way they studied with a humor and tact that found a ready response in the children's fathers.

"Mattie tells me you're goin' to help with the music," said Uncle David, interestedly. "Didn't know you was a musician 'til she told me."

"Yes," said Gray, "I've talked with Mattie since I was at school this morning, and she has persuaded me to take charge of the musical work in the community. My purpose in doing

this is threefold. It'll give me something to do until I get my full strength back again, it'll help the children of the village, and it may aid in solving the mystery of the Kun-ja-muck Cave. I've a sort of bargain with Miss O'Neil, you see. In return for the musical instruction which I give, I'm to take a course in woodcraft from Miss O'Neil and the children at the school. It's something I need very badly, too.

"In regard to our decision of last evening, I've worked out a plan of operation, but it is yet imperfect, and I will wait until I am sure of it before telling you. I promise, however, to bend every effort toward winning over Louie and discovering the mysterious stranger of the cave. While doing this, I may be of some assistance to the children of Orendaga, and they also can teach me some of the lessons of the woods which I failed to get in a university."

"That musical stuff's jest what we need," said Blake. "There's only two pianos in this town, an' nothing else, 'cept th' organ in th' church."

"What ails yer fiddle, Blakie?" called out Milt Boyd.

"Ain't tuned 'er fer a long time," replied Blake, "but she might work 'f I took 'er out o' th' moth balls."

Gray congratulated Blake on knowing how to play a violin, and proposed that a piano be

purchased for the school. In Gray's opinion, an orchestra might even be started at the school, selecting the musically inclined children, and including men like Blake who knew how to play some instrument.

"New idear," observed Isaiah Pikes, laconically. "Good 'un, though."

"I'm in fer it too," exclaimed Blake, "with my last dollar an' every minute I c'n git off fr'm lumb'rin'."

Uncle David walked to the front of the room and stood before the fireplace. He was sometimes called the "silent man" by the guides, from his reluctance to talk at any length. Things in general never called forth a great show of interest on Uncle David's part, but when it became a question of benefiting the children of Orendaga, he was eager to talk. He had never had a child of his own, but lavished his love and affection on his adopted daughter, Mattie.

Clasping his hands behind him and trying to stand erect, Uncle David began to speak.

"I've often thought there wa'n't much singin' in Orendaga, 'specially 'mongst the men. Look at 'em when they come to church! They never open their mouths, an' the boys in Sunday School are just the same way. What we want 'round here is music in our souls, and it seems like your comin' here, Mr. Gray, is goin' to get us all singin' the way we ought to.

I'm goin' to give the Woods Room of this Inn to be used for a community center or whatever you call it, where we c'n all get together and sing and have a good time. We'll have the piano all fixed up, and I'll pay for another one for Mattie's room at the school."

Stamping of feet, cheers and whistles filled the Fishermen's Room when Uncle David had finished. The men looked instinctively to Blake to respond to Uncle David's words.

Gray looked him up and down as he pulled himself together and rose to his full height. What a man! Well over six feet in height, a face of the Lincoln type, showing calm judgment, and a spirit of unselfish devotion to others. His voice was deep, and he spoke evenly, slowly.

"Uncle David," said he, "yuh've been in these parts a long time, an' we've been helped by yuh all our lives, pretty near. Yuh don't talk much, but yuh think heaps, an' t'night yuh've done both. Yuh've done helpful an' thoughtful deeds every day. We all on us know yuh're th' man as cared fer that hungry an' friendless baby that was left here in th' Inn. 'F yuh hadn't of saved an' eddicated Mattie O'Neil, God only knows all we'd 've missed. Our homes, an' our lives, too, has been cheered an' blessed by that girl. What yuh've jest said, Uncle David, is 'nother example o' th' kindness that comes straight fr'm God t'

yuh, an' fr'm yuh t' us. We sure can't thank yuh 'nough fer givin' us th' Woods Room an' a new pianner fer Mattie."

All the woodsmen shook hands with Uncle David, whose wrinkled face beamed with pleasure at seeing the happiness he had given to them. The guides promised they would also learn to sing or to play if Gray or Blake would teach them.

At Cal Wilks' suggestion the entire company went into the Woods Room, where there was a piano, to hear Gray sing. Uncle David called in Mattie to tell her about the piano, and Blake went in search of his violin. When all were assembled, Gray sat down at the piano, playing his own accompaniment, and sang "Love's Old Sweet Song." After several repetitions, the men began to sing softly, remembering scraps of the verses here and there, and Blake found the key on his violin, bringing out tones that surprised Gray.

As the evening's entertainment came to a close, Uncle David once more spoke to the woodsmen.

"Remember, men," said he, "music, like many other things worth livin' for, begins in the heart."

During the next few days, Gray found the welfare of the community of growing interest to him. He was beginning to feel at home,

and the names and faces of the woodsmen and their families were now intimately associated in his mind. Their pleasure over every new development in regard to music and other social activities in the village was real and unmistakable.

"City folks that us'ally come up here in th' summer," said Isaiah, "gen'rally try t' see how much they c'n git 'n take away with 'em, 'stead o' thinkin' 'bout improvements. Don't s'pose most on 'em ever wonder what we got t' do in th' long winter days. 'F 'twa'n't fer this music stuff, don't know what we would do t' pass th' time."

Mattie was filled with new life and energy in helping Gray with his plans for making the Orendaga community center a success. She had seen the effect of the music in the Woods Room with the guides a few days before, and realized the possibilities of the "sing" opened to those who were working for the happiness of the villagers. Mattie was more than thankful for the united help of Gray and Blake. It was only Uncle David who knew the depth of gratitude within her soul, for he was the only person to whom she unfolded her hopes, fears and joys. Throwing her arms around him at night, after a day spent in bringing good cheer and happiness to their needy souls, Mattie hugged the old man as she used to when but a child on his knee, and told him again and again

how she loved the only parents she had ever known.

The gift of the piano to the school, she told Uncle David, meant as much to the children as if he had given each child a separate instrument, for now, even those who had never heard a piano except at the Inn might have an opportunity to learn to play. Old David put his hand on her head, stroking her beautiful hair, and told her his plans for the future.

"Your mother an' I," he said, "are 'most at th' end of our road, an' we must tell you that when we're gone, all we have is yours. God sent you to us, an' we feel that this Inn an' all that we possess ought to be used for Christian service. It's His presence, you know, little girl, that safeguards, purifies, an' gives peace. Folks that don't know 'bout Him may come here, an' if they make mistakes an' blunders at first, He'll give them fresh courage an' strengthen them. It's all yours, Mattie dear, an' I know His strong hand'll lead you all the way."

The same night that Uncle David told this to Mattie, Gray tossed restlessly on his bed, unable to quiet his mind. The events of the last few days passed before his mind's eye in rapid succession. There was the "sing" of a few evenings ago and Blake's thoughtful speech. Then, like a shuttle playing back and forth in the loom, his thoughts veered to his office in

the city and he felt the pressure of the routine tasks of the indoor life. Back again came his mind to the Fishermen's Room, where there still seemed to echo the words of Uncle David as he offered to buy a new piano for Mattie's school room.

Then Gray began to wonder what had come over him that he found his daily contact with these rough people so pleasant. Would the old Byron Gray have done what he was doing? Assuredly not. And yet Gray enjoyed it. He acted from no sense of duty, no compulsion, nothing but a desire to be of service. It was strange; he could not explain it. He only knew that he found it satisfying.

It was a great day for Orendaga when the piano arrived. From the first social evening at the Bearfoot Inn, the grown-ups as well as the children of the community had been waiting anxiously for this eventful hour. It marked the beginning of a new life for Orendaga.

"This is a holiday," declared Mattie as she stood at the door of the schoolhouse. Miss Arnold, the teacher of the other room in the school, stood nearby, surrounded by a joyous band of children. The men of the village who were free from work, and all those who could knock off for a part of the day gathered in front of the school at the ringing of the bell. Gray and Blake, ready to boss the job of un-

packing the piano and setting it up, found all the male members of the population present eager to share in the work.

To the accompaniment of Milt Boyd's amusing chatter, the piano was lifted off the truck which had brought it into the wilderness, and was taken through the wide old doorway into Mattie's room, Gray leading the way like a drum-major. While the people assembled, the fathers and mothers of Mattie's pupils as well as those grown-ups who had no children in school, Gray placed the piano at the proper angle and made ready for the "sing."

As Mattie looked over the audience which now filled the room, she spied Uncle David, who, like the children, could not stay away. Mattie called him to the front, and stood beside him, with Gray and Blake, while the people cheered the four who had done so much for the social life of Orendaga, and who were to do so much more.

To christen the new piano, Gray asked Uncle David what he would like to have sung.

"America," replied the old man without a moment's hesitation.

Mattie played while Gray led the singing, and the old man's quavering voice sounded out above the babel of childish voices and the deeper notes of the adults.

There were requests for piano solos by Mattie. Someone shouted, "We want to hear the

piano alone!" and Mattie played the old and familiar "Flower Song." Gray watched her closely while she played. Her technique was good, and her expression better, while her spirited interpretation of the composition surprised Gray, who was a performer of considerable skill himself.

When Mattie had finished, Gray played something that he thought would catch the fancy of these people, Paderewski's "Polish Dance." Before commencing to play, Gray told them a little bit about the composer, his early struggles for recognition and his later success. It pleased the audience, and a call for more was answered by "The Storm." Gray explained to them something about the structure of a piano, and about the workings of the human voice, things which they had never heard before and to which they listened in open-mouthed wonder.

The crowd was delighted to learn that Jack Blake had brought his fiddle, and that he would play, accompanied by Mattie. It was Gray who had planned it, thinking of the simplicity of these people, and desiring to begin at their level, gradually working up to better music. Later, he told himself, such names as Bach, Beethoven, Gounod and Mozart would become by-words to the people of Orendaga.

"Mr. Blake's first selection," announced Gray, "will be 'Money Musk.'"

A thunder of applause greeted this statement. It was a piece they knew, and one of which they never tired. It awoke memories of barn dances and winter parties, held years ago when they were young.

"That kind o' playin'," said Milt Boyd, "is what I like. This Padderwhisky may be a clever guy, but gimme good ol' 'Money Musk' any day."

At Uncle David's request the first piano recital at Orendaga was ended with the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner."

For three weeks Gray and Mattie, assisted by Blake in the evenings, devoted much time to music. The first hour of school in the morning was set apart for devotion and singing, and on Saturday night there was choir practice for the services in the little white church.

Gray had much to keep him busy. Once a week he conducted a musicale in the Woods Room of the Bearfoot Inn, to which all the people of Orendaga and nearby districts were invited. Mattie and Blake helped him work out the program of these musicales, making them educational as well as entertaining. In this way many evenings were spent at the Inn, singing the villagers into happier relations with one another, sweetening the day's toil, and giving cheer to the stranger that might chance that way.

Blake's fiddle was soon known as a violin,

and even Milt Boyd wanted to learn to play something. Gray tried hard to help him, but without success.

"I don't believe you could even play a jew's-harp and get any music out of it," was Gray's conclusion.

"I must be good fer somethin'," said Milt, lugubriously. "Couldn't I beat up th' bones er play th' bass drum? Goin' t' have a orchestry sometime, ain't yuh?"

"Yes," replied Gray, "but those things require accuracy and a lot of practice. Bones are pretty difficult to play. In our minstrel show, which we'll have some time in June or July when the city folks are here, the bones will play an important part. Some people think they only clatter, but if you'll watch a good player you'll see that he puts more music in every shake of his wrist than some people can bring out of a piano."

"Guess I can't play 'em, then," mourned Milt. "But what 'bout th' bass drum?"

"Well, how's your time?" asked Gray. "Can you keep step when the band plays? Get out there in the aisle and let's see."

Gray went to the piano and began playing "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys Are Marching." Milt marched up one aisle and down the other, Gray watching him closely.

"What do you think about it?" queried

Gray when Milt drew near the piano. "Are you keeping step?"

"Sure," said Milt.

Gray was forced to disagree with him, and left the village josher to console himself with the thought that he would be free to josh the minstrel show without restraint, since he himself, apparently, would not be a part of it.

# CHAPTER V.

## WHERE HEAVEN TOUCHES EARTH

I will cast in the depths of the fathomless sea
All your sins and transgressions, whatever they be.
Though they mount up to heaven, though they reach down to hell,
They shall sink into depths, and above them shall swell
All my waves of forgiveness so mighty and free,
I will cast all your sins in the depths of the sea.

In the deep, silent depths far away from the shore,
Where they never may rise up to trouble thee more,
Where no far-reaching tide with its pitiless sweep
May stir the dark waves of forgiveness deep,
I have buried them there, where no mortal can see,
I have cast all your sins in the depths of the sea.

AS the month of May drew to a close, Gray heard the call of the forest more strongly than ever, and longed to be on his way, over the trails and up the narrow waterways.

Again and again he examined the equipment already purchased—an Indian canoe of the steadiest and swiftest pattern, mess kits and clothing suitable for life in the woods. He was not exactly restless, for his stay in the village of Orendaga had been of service to the community and to himself, and was altogether pleasant.

Gray's bodily strength was nearly back to normal; sleepless nights had disappeared, despondency had taken flight, and hopefulness

and good cheer possessed him. His problems and imaginary burdens had melted away like snow before the sun.

The outdoor exercise, which he had not failed to take every day, rain or shine, and regular hours for sleep and meals, had put him in shape for the harder undertaking.

"Time well spent," he thought of his stay in Orendaga. "Here is my base of operation, and here are friends who will prove true whether I succeed or fail in my attempt to discover the Kun-ja-muck mystery."

The music he had introduced into Orendaga Gray liked to think of as the axe which was blazing the trail through the forest, over mountain and through valley to the cabin of Louie Lamont, the trapper, and thence to the lonely cave on the Kun-ja-muck. Through his efforts for the villagers, Gray had won his way into their hearts and lives, and he knew that this would mean much to him when he once became involved in the solution of the mystery.

Sometimes he liked to wonder just how it happened that he had stumbled into all the friendships and associations which meant so much to him in Orendaga. It was almost as though an unseen hand had guided him, first to Joe and his family, then to the store where he had first heard the story of the cave.

Then there were the people he had met. Where, in all his travels, had he ever found

such a man as this Jack Blake? Artless, uneducated, yet so capable and resourceful, Blake seemed to Gray one of the biggest-hearted men he had ever known. The big woodsman touched the lives with which he came into contact, and considered the poverty-stricken villager or the logman on the river worthy of as much, or more, kindness and consideration as the well groomed and polished metropolitan.

Uncle David and his wife, the good Mother of the Inn, had not struggled to cover the earth with their wisdom and influence, which is, with many, nothing more than a desire to be great or to have wide power. Content were they to live simply, with their door open to all, helping the passer-by to find the trail that leads to health of body, strength of mind and bigness of soul.

The children especially impressed Gray. They were poorly clad, some had never seen beyond the limits of Orendaga. Tom and Bill Livingstone had awakened in Gray's heart a feeling that he never supposed could exist with him. They were eager to learn, their backs were bent with work that should have been done by men; but their hearts were full of praise for the blessings which they did have and their greatest desire was to help Louie Lamont, who had befriended them because they were poor.

Gray had come from one of those homes in

the city where moderate wealth had made his youth entirely free from any of the problems known to practically every one of the boys of Orendaga. An only child, he had not been stinted, and had moved among companions who knew neither the struggle nor the happiness that comes to those who walk among the commoner things of life. His father had been devoted to business with his whole soul—for seven days a week, in the whirlpool of stocks, bonds and investments—there Gray's father lived and died.

Byron Gray had followed hard on the same well beaten path after his graduation from college, believing it to be his duty. When suddenly confronted with the choice of living an outdoor life, relaxing nerve tension and heart pressure, or dying at a premature age as his father had done, Gray was tremendously shocked and disappointed. The life he was following in the business world was the only life he had ever considered or believed he should consider. He was struggling toward a goal, honorable and worthy, as the world terms it, and one deemed proper for any young man.

In his analysis of what he had been and what he now was, Gray compared his former ideas of life with what he was now learning from the simple hearted people of the mountains. Assuredly, he told himself, they had taught him many lessons of lasting value.

Among the men whom Gray desired to know better was Paul Ward, the spiritual guide and pastor of the little white church at Orendaga —a man among men. Ward bore no outward sign of his profession; there was nothing in his garb to show that he was, supposedly, a better man than those he came to help. Occasionally Gray had attended the little white church, listening to Ward's few words, at first with passive mind, and then with an awakening interest.

Gray remembered the last Sunday service he had attended at the little white church. Cal Wilks was ringing the bell for the evening service, and as Gray entered the church the old hunter stood, erect, his hand on the bell rope and a smile on his face. Gray returned his hearty "Good evening," and took a seat in the small auditorium.

The pastor entered and went directly to the pulpit. He seemed eager to open the service, eager to talk to the villagers who were filling the pews. He was young, tall, and of forceful bearing, and an earnest emotion flooded his face as he preached.

"For this God is our God, forever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death," was the text of the evening's sermon. Ward pictured the need for a spiritual guide with a few swift strokes and shadings, speaking simply and with the dignity of truth.

Gray did not usually ponder the words of a sermon, but that night, after the service, he strolled to the rear door of the church and stood there, looking out over the valley, and thinking about Ward, the friend of all men, and the message just given.

It was mid-evening, with the twilight just deepening over Orendaga. The mountains were nearly blue against the sky, a sky brilliant with red and gold streaks. The whole valley was o'erspread by a sort of roseate glow and the lake shone at times like a diamond, catching flashes of colored light which faded away into the dark green of the fir trees along the shore.

The minister stepped to Gray's side unnoticed, and the two men stood silently side by side for some moments. Neither man seemed in the mood for conversation, and after a murmured "Good-night," Gray strolled back to the Inn, his mind pre-occupied with thoughts of what life really meant to him and what it should mean. The scene often presented itself vividly to Gray's mind, and he resolved to know Ward more intimately.

One day Gray decided to make good his promise to visit the Livingstone boys. The home of the widow Livingstone was the common meeting place for the poorer people of the region—those who had to struggle for the bare necessities of life. At the Livingstone

home were made curios and souvenirs of all sorts — baskets, balsam pillows, miniature canoes of birch bark, and rustic furniture. Tom and Bill were experts in this type of work and also in taxidermy of all kinds.

Here, on a common level, met those who desired interesting and worth while employment, and particularly on Saturday was there a gathering of some considerable size at the Livingstone home.

As Gray neared the top of the hill, shouts of welcome from the boys greeted him, and a great bustling among the curio makers proved his visit to be quite unexpected, and no small event to the people. Tom and Bill escorted him to the crude, slab-side workshop where Mrs. Livingstone greeted him most cordially. Gray looked about him with delight in his face.

"So this is the studio of the Livingstone boys!" said he. "Truly, it's one of the most unique studios I've ever seen!"

Gray's admiration was genuine and his words had a sincere ring to them.

"Great walk by way of the trail," continued the visitor.

The boys laughed as they saw him mopping perspiration from his flushed face.

"Some climb, over th' heights," said Milt Boyd, who always came out to fill balsam pillows on warm afternoons.

"Well, I'll get used to it after a while," re-

joined Gray. "My muscles are growing harder and my feet tougher every day."

As he sat there in a rustic chair there came to him a remembrance of the story of this workshop, "Pinesides," and of how Tom and Bill happened to be fatherless.

Mr. Livingstone, an artist, had been forced to leave the city because of ill health and had sought refuge in the Adirondacks, hoping to strengthen his hold on life and keep his family together.

What a view over the valley! Gray's eyes took in the far flung beauty of the mountains and of Lake Pleasant, lying quietly in the mellow calmness of a spring afternoon. Far down the lake, at the north end of a snow white beach which had been given its color by the glaciers, was the mouth of a river that could be traced in and out among the woods until it became lost in distant hills. Not far away nestled Echo Lake, with here and there a quaint farmhouse.

Directly below "Pinesides" lay the village of Orendaga, at the foot of Bear Mountain, with the steeple of the little white church pointing upward from its more sombre background. The sun, nearing the horizon, cast beams of light across the heavens, turning the pink and gray of the fleecy clouds into a radiant orange.

"Truly, this is where heaven touches earth,"

said Gray under his breath; and he knew why Livingstone's last picture, "Where Heaven Touches Earth," had been the first honor painting at the Academy of Design exhibition five years before. Just after the painting was finished, Gray remembered, the artist had given up the struggle for life.

Gray's meditations were interrupted by the coming of Paul Ward. The two men greeted each other warmly and sat down side by side. They exchanged frequent remarks with Mrs. Livingstone and those who were working with her.

After a while Ward asked if Gray had seen Livingstone's famous canvas, Gray replying that he had a very clear remembrance of it.

"It was a marvellous work," said Gray, reminiscently. "I have often wondered whether that painting could be true to nature. Now I know it was."

Gray looked away over the hills and conjured up a vision of the painting as he remembered it. He realized that no painter could do justice to the scene that stretched out before him.

Livingstone's canvas, recalled Gray, was a symphony of lights and shades, blending in colorful harmony. Hills, tipped with gold, their slopes suffused with a bluish haze, were reflected in the waters of the lake—waters tinged with the gorgeousness of the sunset. Low lying storm clouds of rich purplish grays,

set against the horizon with fringes of flame, produced a rhapsody of color that was magnificent, almost too magnificent to be real. Higher clouds were limned in white and gold with gentle flushings of shell pink.

Gray finally spoke.

"That painting," said he, "had a spiritual quality which I never realized until I came here. I never believed that such sunsets as I have seen here could be transcribed to canvas."

"I can understand how Livingstone felt, in part," returned Ward. "I watched that painting grow under his hand; I saw the struggle he went through."

"It gives an entirely new meaning to nature, for me," said Gray. "Livingstone was, as you have told me, a mystic. Yet his painting is not unreal. It is, rather,—" He stopped, groping for words to express what he felt.

"A transfiguration," suggested Ward, softly.

Gray nodded a silent assent.

"Gray," the minister spoke slowly, evenly, "I think Livingstone felt in nature what the ancient psalmists did—a revelation of God. In olden times they said:

"'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.'

"Livingstone simply painted his psalm."

# CHAPTER VI.

## THE MINSTREL SHOW

Ten thousand sowers through the land
  Passed heedless on their way;
Ten thousand seeds in every hand
  Of every sort had they.
They cast seed here,
  They cast seed there,
    They cast seed everywhere.

Anon, as many a year went by,
  These sowers came once more,
And wandered 'neath the leaf-hid sky
  And wondered at the store,
For fruit hung here,
  And fruit hung there,
    And fruit hung everywhere.

Nor knew they in their tangled wood
  The trees that were their own;
Yet as they plucked, as each one should,
  Each plucked what he had sown.
So do men here,
  So do men there,
    So do men everywhere.

GRAY and Blake found themselves becoming more closely linked together in their everyday pleasures and duties. Though very different in temperament, they were both growing to see the great fundamentals of life more clearly. To Gray, particularly, the unconscious influence of those around him who had become settled in their faith, purpose, and work, gave a new and

broader vision of life. He was now separating the grain from the chaff. In the city he had looked out upon the world through the mists of materialism which clouded the atmosphere in which he lived; but here in the hills he was seeing the realities of life in a new perspective.

How useful in the village of Orendaga were these two men, the one of the forest and the other of the city! Both were strong, for Gray had now regained the physical vigor which had made him one of the greatest tackles his university football team had even known. Yet Gray and Blake were just common men, liked by most of the people of the district, but not by all.

In talking over plans for further social endeavor among the villagers, the two men had decided that a minstrel show would be the best thing to bring everyone together on a common basis. That sort of thing was just what appealed to these simple people, and Gray felt that he could make it a success with the talent he had already discovered.

It was in preparing for the minstrel show that Gray first met open hostility on the part of some men in Orendaga.

Uncle David had given the Woods Room in the Inn for rehearsals, and the younger people of the town were eager to take part. The entire community buzzed with preparation, most of the people planning to take an active part

in the show, while others gave evidence of unmistakable opposition. The hostility toward Gray centered around one Mike Murphy, a man of much force and vigor, whose stubbornness and ignorance were colossal.

Before the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment, he kept a saloon on Main Street. To the uninitiated, this place was nothing more than a billiard room; but to the Tamerack gang it was a rendezvous for debauch, gambling and political trickery. Mike Murphy was the head of an organization of bootleggers who smuggled in liquor from across the Canadian border; and his erstwhile saloon, now known as the "Temperance Parlor," had become a filthy dive where poisonous liquor could be procured as easily as before Prohibition.

Mike and his followers had no use for the school, the church, or the work which Gray and Blake were doing in Orendaga. They opposed any movement for enlightenment or betterment of social conditions, and, as was to be expected, abused the leaders of the minstrel show and laughed with bitter jeers at those taking part in the rehearsals.

Gray and Blake were seated in the Woods Room of the Bearfoot Inn one morning, talking over plans for the minstrel show and the best way to combat Mike Murphy's opposition. They had just begun to discuss ways of getting some of the men of the village away from

the "Temperance Parlor" and its influence, when Mattie entered the room.

She noticed their earnestness and asked if she could be of help to them.

"Can't you suggest a way of getting these men, the fathers of your school children, interested in more worthy things?" asked Gray.

"We have helped the fathers already," replied Mattie, "through their children. Look at Sally Edwards' father, Sandy. He still hangs around Mike's place, but he doesn't get horribly drunk the way he used to. And I think Jimmy Woodward, Sam's boy, has helped his father as a result of our efforts with the music and other work at school."

"Well," said Gray, "Jack and I think that this minstrel will do a great deal toward bringing the fathers of these school children into a more wholesome atmosphere than that in which they have been living. We seem certain to have trouble with Murphy, but perhaps it's a good thing. If we can bring him out in the open and fight him with weapons like the minstrel show, I think it will do more good than trying to get his followers to desert him one by one."

"Yuh're right," broke in Blake. "Mike's got a pow'rful strong hold o' some o' them fellers, 'specially Sam Woodward an' Sandy Edwards. 'Tain't no use tryin' t' git th' law onto him, 'cause he's got too much p'litical

pull. He don't have t' worry 'bout gittin' 'rested fer bootleggin'."

"And besides," said Mattie, returning to the discussion of the minstrel show, "in this way we'll get right next to the men, meet them on their own ground, and then we may be able to lift them little by little until they can continue on their way alone."

"I think it'd be a good plan," said Blake, "t' put Sam an' Sandy on th' minstrel c'mmittee. They c'n sing pretty fair, when they ain't drunk, an' if we c'n git 'em into it, there's no tellin' how far we might be able t' git 'em away fr'm Mike an' that Tamerack gang."

Gray and Mattie agreed, and Sam and Sandy were duly enrolled on the minstrel committee.

Gray was anxious to get the show into shape as soon as possible. He wanted to be away on the trail to Louie and the Kun-ja-muck Cave. This minstrel show, he told himself, would be the last social event he directed before starting on his long trip. Then too, he felt that it would make a final link between himself and those people in the village whom he might need to count as friends and helpers after his quest had begun.

The last rehearsal for the minstrel was in progress at the Town Hall. Every performer was in his place, when, to the great surprise of many of those assembled, in walked Mike Murphy.

He was a massively built man—tall, broad shouldered, and heavy with muscle. His face was uncouth in its expression, in spite of fairly good features. His eyes were keen, yet sullen with foreboding; his lips were loose and sensual; his somewhat bulbous nose bore an ugly scar, jagged and livid; his coloring was so florid that he seemed in a perpetual rage, even when most jovial. Black eyebrows, thick and bushy, sat upon his face like a thunder cloud.

He stood in the doorway, defiant, with his hands in his pockets and a leer turning up the corners of his mouth. But he said nothing, nor did he come nearer the stage. His nervous eyes spotted two of his Tamerack gang in the chorus. He looked at them with such a pitying disgust that the men, Sandy and Sam, cringed like dogs before the whip.

The program was moving along in a satisfactory way. Blake was the middle man, while Gray stood on the floor, giving directions and making suggestions as each took his part. The end men were Sandy, on the right, and Sam on the left. Sandy had just said, "Mr. Middle Man, whom do you consider the biggest aristocrat in the city of Orendaga," and the middle man had given it up, with permission for Sam to answer the query. Sam began, "The biggest aristocrat in the city of Orendaga is—" Here Mike jumped up and began to curse Gray and the others in the room with violent oaths flood-

ing his speech. The storm broke as a surprise. It was terrific, for Mike's voice was deep, resonant, electric in anger. He roared at Sam and Sandy, and with murderous threats ordered them to back him. They looked at each other, then toward Blake. Blake's eyes were fixed steadily on Murphy.

Nearer and nearer Mike pushed toward Gray. There was no chance for debate or explanation, for Mike came with one purpose, apparent to all who knew him, and easily understandable to all others.

Blake recognized Gray's danger. The serpent was coiling and planning to strike a blow which might prove serious. Sandy and Sam trembled with indecision. Lose Mike and they would lose their entrance to the Temperance Parlor. Its cellars would be closed to them forever.

To them, it was a choice between Mike's whiskey and Blake's Minstrel Show. The only thing which bound them to Mike was the appetite for liquor, which held them as in a vice and became the one great craving of their lives.

Mike Murphy leaped toward Gray, but Blake struck before the heavy blow fell. As Blake and the assailant gripped each other, on came Sandy and Sam. Gray saw at a glance that they were prepared to stand by Mike and as he looked at them he knew they had yielded to Murphy's will. It was Sandy who struck

first; then Sam prepared to place a blow where Blake would not recover.

Gray smiled and brought his teeth together with a snap. What a change had come over him in these few weeks! The strong chin, turned slightly up, indicated that the old football tackle was ready.

Sam soon lay between the chairs, completely taken out of the fray, and old Sandy was trying to pull himself together somewhere down the aisle. Gray stood there, still cool and ready for both of them if they chose to return. He gloried in his new-found strength, and waited tensely.

Mike and Blake were more evenly matched and fought like men of the woods, Mike fiercely striking for the face or watching for a deadly grip or overpowering blow. Gray stood with one eye on the battle and the other on Mike's pals. They were so taken by surprise that they hesitated to try it again, although Gray's position indicated that he expected another attack on their part.

Just at the moment when Mike seemed to be getting the better of Blake, Sam and Sandy jumped at Gray with one leap. Both clinched him; one pounded his back, the other fought him bitterly, as only a madman can. As a test of strength Gray well knew it would be a decisive victory for them and his only hope lay in scientifically widening the circle by rapid

work; first, by striking a heavy blow at one and then by a sudden under-stroke taking out the other. It worked like a charm, and, with back to the wall, he followed them up, first one, then the other, until they dropped exhausted to the floor. Seeing that Blake was still struggling, Gray went to his side and panted, "I'll take him from now on, watch the other two."

Mike was slobbering at the mouth, and his eyes were like those of a vicious bull, red and inflamed. He made one desperate plunge, which Gray dodged, and Mike swung his whole weight into space. Turning quickly, Gray caught him by the throat and hurled him with mighty force against the wall and to the floor. Once down, Mike found his breath gone. He understood that he had lost the struggle and was now at his opponent's mercy.

There stood Sam and Sandy, badly bruised from their fight. They showed no disposition to try it again. Blake had the appearance of having had a long, rough bout in the ring, and, with hair tousled and his clothes torn and disarranged, he stood, breathing hard, satisfaction lining his lips with a slight smile.

Gray was the first to speak. Looking at Blake he said, "Mr. Middle Man, whom do you consider the biggest aristocrat in the city of Orendaga?"

Blake laughed aloud; Sam and Sandy shuffled their feet and only stared at each other.

Mike was still lying on the floor, panting and blowing helplessly.

"Well, I must say," said Blake, in answer to the minstrel joke, "the biggest aristocrat in the city of Orendaga is Mattie's old tom-cat; he's always out all night like a prosperous bootlegger!"

A nervous laugh came from the frightened chorus, now widely scattered.

Mike sat up, looked at his opponents, mopped his brow and said, "Well, boys, I guess th' show's over. Good practisin'. I'll be 'round t'morrow night t' see yez all agin."

He started to leave, but Blake said, "Oh, no, be a good sport, shake hands."

Mike did so, not unwillingly, it seemed; then he walked over to Sandy and Sam and addressed them in a sentence: "You curs—stick t' these high-toned half-breeds 'f yuh want to." He left the room. Sandy and Sam soon followed, when they thought no one was looking.

On the following evening the Town Hall, which stands near the little white church, was filled with villagers and a few city guests. All eagerly waited for the drawing of the curtain, which parted in the middle and was pulled back from either side, in the immemorial manner of Town Hall curtains. The more timid men and boys from the back streets and farther up in the hills stood along the wall in the rear.

The young people had purchased the usual

supply of peanuts and conversational lozenges. Long legged youths handed or tossed them to their sweethearts, with such messages in red lettering as "I love you," "Throw me a kiss," or "Meet me when the moon comes up." The girls would affect indignation, or bashfulness, yet they tucked their messages away in some treasure place on their persons. Everyone was in high glee, for this was the first minstrel show ever held in the village. These people were as much excited as though a circus had come to town.

The Livingstone boys were on hand; their mother was with them and Sally, Sandy's daughter, sat beside her, deeply disappointed. She had expected her father would be there and be a performer. Never had she and her mother been so happy as during the past two weeks, when the father was spending his evenings at the Bearfoot Inn for rehearsals, rather than at Mike's den. That had been the only thing he had done of late to please them. Sandy, in his own circle, had the reputation of being a "card."

Gray and Blake remembered Mike's words of the night before: "I'll be 'round t'-morrow night t' see yez agin." Just how they should interpret that promise was a question. It could be taken either way; back in peace or back to fight it out.

They rather thought he meant to fight, for

those who knew Mike Murphy best were sure the feud was just begun. That was the expectation of Sally, and her mother had not dared to come, fearing a greater disgrace would fall on her already weakened body and broken spirit. Eager faces watched the door and every newcomer caused a thrill of fear to pass over the audience.

Blake was in the center of the stage; on the right Gray, Rob, Cal and Isaiah, with Sam's chair vacant; on the left were Ward, Lou, Milt and Tom Livingstone, with Sandy's chair vacant. The faces of all were well blackened, and their clothing was of fancy colors with gaudy stripes.

As the curtains were pulled back the audience cheered loudly, for only a look at each performer was a show in itself to these people. They eagerly scanned each figure for some mark of identification.

In walked Mary Arnold, the other school teacher, on the left, and Mattie on the right, both stepping in lively fashion and keeping perfect time. They were dressed in southern plantation style, and after frisking about for a moment in some Topsy manoeuverings, came to a stand before the chairs left empty by the non-appearance of Sandy and Sam, who had hitherto been faithful, if not over-enthusiastic, members of the chorus. Keeping time, one

with a red and the other with a green parasol, Mary and Mattie started the opening song.

The jokes and choruses were full of life and laughter, each being encored with great gusto by the audience. Milt Boyd had at last persuaded Gray that he could march in step to "John Brown's Body," and with a broad grin of delight on his countenance, the lumbering, awkward woodsman strutted back and forth. Lou Fountain, second best josher in Orendaga, whom everyone called a "limb," played the mouth organ, and Isaiah Pikes the jew's-harp. The whistling chorus with Paul Ward playing an obligato on the flute was also a great hit.

Just before the last number in the show, old Uncle David stepped from behind the curtain and stood at the front of the platform.

"Dear friends," he said, "we've all been entertained to-night in a happy way. There's a sayin' that 'a merry heart doeth good like medicine,' an' after this splendid minstrel show we all realize, I think, that times of good fellowship like this must be more frequent in Orendaga than they have been. Th' people you see here on this platform have worked hard holdin' rehearsals, an' I rejoice to say that it's all been for a noble purpose.

"School's meant a lot more to th' children of Orendaga than it ever did before. It's goin' to mean more yet, for an orchestra has been

organized an' instruments for th' boys an' girls to play on have been bought, thanks to Mr. Gray. All those present who think that this is a worthy cause, an' who desire to have a part in payin' for the instruments to be used by our children, may leave your contributions with those pickaninnies standin' at th' door."

Uncle David had scarcely finished speaking when Mike Murphy entered and strode up the aisle, followed by several of the Tamerack gang. Those at the minstrel show who remembered the Tamerack chieftain's threat to come back to the hall had been fearful all evening, hoping that the clash would not come that night. It now appeared that their worst fears were to be realized.

The audience was dumbfounded. Not a word was spoken while Mike and his followers lined up in front of Uncle David, who had not moved from his position on the platform. Mike was the first to speak.

"Uncle David," he said, and then hesitated. "Uncle David, me an' Sam, an' Sandy, an' these other fellers thet used t' b'long t' th' Tamerack group wants a part in this here minstr'l show. We come up here t' practice las' night, 's yuh prob'ly know, an' I swore I'd be here t'night. Well, here I be. Didn't come in afore 'count o' not wantin' t' scare nobody."

Mike paused again and looked around at the rest of his gang, who shifted uneasily.

"Mebbe yuh don't know it," he continued, "but my place was raided las' night. There ain't goin' t' be no more Temp'rance Parlor, an' I dunno but I'm kind o' glad on it. 'Pears like there ain't no place fer a feller like me in Orendaga right now."

As Mike talked, Gray observed a slinking glance directed at himself from time to time. Once he thought he detected a thinly veiled sneer, but it was so quickly hidden as to be unnoticeable to one who was not watching for it.

"Us fellers ain't come fer revenge," went on Mike. "When Mike Murphy's licked in a square fight, he owns up t' it 'cause he ain't no squealer. I want t' tell you fellers I ain't got hard feelin's 'gin yuh, an' I hope yuh ain't got 'em 'gin me."

As he finished, Sam and Sandy shuffled up to Gray and asked, with much hemming and hawing, to be allowed to make up for their behavior the night before.

Murphy, however, turned on his heel and stalked out of the room. Just as he passed through the doorway, he looked over his shoulder at Gray, who had been watching his exit. From the eyes of the suddenly reformed bootlegger shot a glare of such malevolence and slumbering hatred that Gray involuntarily started. Before he could recover his composure, Murphy had gone.

# CHAPTER VII.

## THE QUEST BEGINS

If thou wilt be a hero, and wilt strive
To help thy fellow and exalt thyself,
Thy feet at last shall stand on jasper floors;
Thy heart, at last, shall seem a thousand hearts—
Each single heart with myriad raptures filled—
While thou shalt sit with princes and with kings,
Rich in the jewel of a ransomed soul.

SCHOOL was over, vacation had begun, and the closing days of June were bright, giving promise of a glorious summer. Gray was eager to be away to the woods, now that his part in helping Mattie and Blake to create a new social life in Orendaga had been fulfilled. Everything he had done in the little village had served to lay an excellent foundation for his difficult undertaking. He had come to know the country better as a result of his many short excursions into nearby haunts, and his friendship with the Orendaga guides he felt to be lasting and durable. With the assistance of Blake, he could now arrange a definite program for the winning of Louie Lamont and the search for the "Spirit of the Kun-ja-muck."

Gray's two months' stay at Orendaga had made him a new man. He had climbed all the

surrounding hills, and some of the more distant mountains—Snowy, Speculator, Hamilton and Turtle. In mountain climbing he found himself able to hold his own with most of the native guides and woodsmen.

In appearance, he was totally unlike the man whom Joe had spotted as a "city yap" at the Northville station. With the red and black flannel shirt of the woodsman, corduroy trousers, high lumberman's boots and a red bandanna around his neck, he looked like an old timer. His face had lost its indoor whiteness; in its stead was the brown, healthy looking complexion given to man only by the sun, wind and outdoor exercise.

No trace of broken nerves could be seen in the man. His step was elastic, his form erect. The worn and indifferent expression which was habitual to his face when he left the city had given way to a cheerful smile and a hopeful countenance. Every muscle of his body had been brought into play, toughened and hardened.

Canoeing was one of Gray's favorite pastimes, for it usually included a second person —either Mattie or Blake, and sometimes both. One of his best loved trips was a paddle through Lake Pleasant into the half-mile stream leading into Sacandaga. Both of these lakes were like jewels in evergreen settings. The islands, bays, and beaches of glistening

white sand were like will-o'-the-wisps, calling one to the beautiful beyond. On they would paddle, with new horizons ever in view.

Landing in a tiny cove, Gray and his companion, whoever it might be, would take the canoe on their shoulders and follow a trail to still other lakes and streams. It was but a quarter of a mile from Lake Sacandaga to Fawn Lake, and then, following a winding trail, they continued through Vly Lake and down the stream to Fall Lake, thence to Ox Bow and Piseco. The region fascinated Gray, and he was impatient to push his explorations farther.

Gray and Blake had just finished a three-day paddle test in preparation for the longer journey to the West Canada lake region where they hoped to locate Louie Lamont and from him learn something of the mystery of the Kun-ja-muck.

Blake was satisfied that Gray could make the long trip, carrying his pack, blanket and gun without overdoing.

Gray treasured every incident of Louie's shrewdness and skill in woodcraft, that he might be better prepared to meet the strange old trapper. Often the guides, gathered at the Inn to while away the evening, served Gray as vast storehouses of information upon which he might draw almost at will.

"Don't yuh r'member, 'Saiah," said Cal one

evening when the guides were all assembled about the fire and the talk centered about the peculiar Frenchman, "that summer when we was up t' th' Dug Mountain ponds after trout, an' we found ol' Louie up thar? He'd built a lean-to out'n fir trees, an' was jest finishin' three bunks full o' balsam twigs. Had a mess o' trout all cleaned an' laid 'tween basswood leaves ready fer cookin'. We was right glad t' see him, but he didn't say nothin' 'cept that grunt o' his. Kind o' looked like we wa'n't welcome an' jest buttin' in."

"That's jest like Louie," broke in Blake. " 'F he don't want yuh 'round yuh'll soon know it."

"That extry bunk looked funny t' me, somehow. Who was it fer? 'F Louie had visitors where was they hidin'? Us fellers know better 'n t' ask Louie. Pretty soon he come up near, an' 'Saiah spoke up 'n asked me 'f I thought we better stay thar over night. I says 'Guess we best go on down stream 'til we git t' whar they's little more shelter.' Louie didn't say nothin' but jest walked 'round th' fire, waitin' fer us t' move 'long 'thout his sayin' so. Heaps o' times 'fore that both me an' 'Saiah has stayed at Louie's cabin up th' Kun-ja-muck, an' he was allers alone, an' allers glad t' see us."

Isaiah hitched his chair round to face the group of guides more squarely.

" 'Twa'n't hard t' see that Louie was protectin' somethin' or somebody fr'm strangers."

"Do you think the man of the Kun-ja-muck Cave could have been with Louie?" asked Gray.

Isaiah took upon himself the duty of replying.

"Waal, that's th' question. We dunno, an' they's no way o' findin' out fr'm Louie. Jest leave it t' that feller t' keep a secret."

"What gits me," interrupted Cal, "was th' fact that Louie had somebody thar that got fust place with him, even 'fore me an' 'Saiah. Us two is his oldest friends, too. We been his friends ever since he come t' these parts."

Cal paused and looked significantly at Isaiah. It was apparent that there was something further, about which the two men were hesitant of speaking.

As if in answer to a question from Cal, Isaiah said, "Yuh best tell 'em, Cal. Gray an' Jack needs all th' information they c'n git."

Cal thought for a moment, and then proceeded slowly with his story.

"Me an' 'Saiah did think o' that Kun-ja-muck feller when we seen them two extry bunks. He got up 'nough courage t' ask Louie 'f th' stranger did any huntin'. They was two guns an' fishin' poles thar. Waal, Louie's eyes snapped up an' he looked kind o' ugly fer a minute. He stood up straight an'

snarled, 'None yore beezness,' an' then went over t'other side th' fire an' squatted down. Ol' Louie wa'n't mad fer long, though. Pretty soon he spoke up an' says, 'Some day you know, not know now.'

"We knew th' color o' Louie's blankets, too," continued Cal. "but 'sides his they was two other bundles o' good clean blankets. Looked t' us like they was two people stayin' with Louie, an' it 'peared like they wasn't used t' th' woods, neither. Me an' 'Saiah never said a word 'bout this b'fore. 'Twa'n't no use. Seemed funny they was two of 'em 'stead o' one like we allers thought."

These discussions among the guides had given Gray a fairly good idea of Louie's strange ways, and of what to expect when the old French trapper was met face to face. Gray now knew his favorite trapping haunts and fishing grounds, and also the location of the two cabins which the hunter used. One of these was on West Canada Lake, where Louie usually spent the summer months; the winter cabin was on the Kun-ja-muck River at the point where the main trail crossed, northeast of Owl Pond.

Everything seemed to indicate that Louie was someone's protector, and this someone could only be the mysterious dweller of the cave, or, as it now appeared, the two persons who had lived in such secrecy.

Gray questioned in his own mind whether the Kun-ja-muck Cave could be inhabited by a person who had been able to remain undiscovered for so long a time by the guides and woodsmen of the region. How could this person secure supplies, except through someone like Louie? Where could he disappear to at the approach of strangers? Gray had pondered these things ever since the beginning of his stay in Orendaga, and he was no nearer to a conclusion now than he had been two months before.

Far into the night Gray sat in his room alone, thinking over all the strange things he had learned. He was especially puzzled by the influence that had apparently changed Louie from a hardened and piratical trapper to a man of kindliness and generosity. Louie was certainly a fascinating problem. Even the people of Orendaga were very much bewildered by his gradual metamorphosis. Some looked upon him as a miracle of nature's working, a theory that precluded the influence of any mysterious being, even such a one as was reputed to live in the Kun-ja-muck Cave. Others saw an unknown force lifting him from the lower levels of life to a higher plane of gentleness and helpfulness. It was as though Louie were living with someone endowed with the mysticism of an ancient prophet. Only a powerful force could transform a poor, igno-

rant half-breed, a wanderer with vicious habits which were inherent in his nature, into one who called the thunder of the mountain storms the voice of God.

If the man of the Kun-ja-muck Cave had any part in bringing about this transformation in Louie, argued Gray to himself, why did he remain hidden?

As Gray continued to turn these questions over in his mind, he heard a light rap on his bedroom door. He opened it to see Blake standing just outside. The woodsman did not wait for an invitation to enter, but helped himself to a chair with an air of perfect familiarity.

"Saw yuh're light," he said, shortly, "an' thought I'd come up 'n keep yuh comp'ny fer a while. What's on yer mind t'night? Yuh'd oughter been t' bed hours ago."

"That's so," replied Gray with a smile, "but what's the matter with you? You're prowling around as though it were seven o'clock in the morning, and it happens to be only two."

Blake answered him with a laugh, "Been up all night tryin' t' see through that myst'ry business. Thought 'f I worked 'lone fer a spell I might git some good idee. But th' longer I worked th' farther I got, an' so I quit no more'n a couple o' minutes ago an' come over here."

"Well," said Gray, "at times I've felt like

rushing into the woods and searching out every trail that Louie frequents, or standing at the entrance of the Kun-ja-muck Cave until I have solved the whole thing. But I know that would defeat the very end for which we are working, and I've tried to wait patiently here in the village so as to gather all the available information on the subject, before entering the wilderness."

" 'Spose we think o' this myster'ous feller o' th' cave fer a minute," said Blake. " 'F we wanted t' git up a big huntin' party an' go after him, I recken we c'd run him down or corner him right soon. Some fellers here in th' village wanted t' do that 'fore yuh come, but Uncle David said as how that'd only drive away th' man we was after, so they didn't."

"I think our present plan is a fairly good one," returned Gray. "You and I will make our trip into the West Canada lake region and try to locate Louie there. If that is unsuccessful we'll take the outfit up the Kun-ja-muck and make a permanent log camp half way between the cave and Louie's cabin, somewhere near the trail.

"Then, to have some purpose that will explain our going into every nook and corner of that region, I will make a special study of the birds and animals of the woods. I have sent for some special camera attachments, built for the purpose of taking animal pictures at

close range. That will keep us busy, and I think it may interest Louie in our experiments."

Blake nodded a vigorous assent. "Jest what we need t' git Louie t' pay some attention t' us. Th' gun wouldn't 'tract him, but somethin' new like that camera business oughter do it. An' 'f we jest hung 'round doin' nothin' he'd git 'spicious."

A tinge of light green crept into the eastern sky. The men were so engrossed in talk that they lost all count of hours. As dawn broke they separated, agreeing to meet at dinner to complete arrangements for the start of their trip on the morrow.

At the noonday meal Blake announced his intention of packing the baskets for the trip that afternoon, selecting the fishing tackle, and getting all their supplies in shape for an early start the next morning. Gray, for his part, had decided upon a final visit with Mattie and Uncle David.

With Mattie, he walked up to "Pinesides" to see whether the Livingstone boys would go with Blake and himself for part of the journey, so as to bring back the canoes when their further use became impracticable. Tom and Bill were overjoyed at the idea, and promised to be on hand for the start early in the morning.

Gray and Blake long remembered their leave taking at the Bearfoot Inn. The sun had crept

only a little way above the horizon when they gathered together their packs, baskets and other equipment. Uncle David and Mattie bustled about, bringing forgotten trifles to the two men. As the hour decided upon for starting drew near, Cal, Isaiah, Rob Stevens and Paul Ward dropped in, and shortly afterward Mrs. Livingstone came with Tom and Bill. The boys were in a flurry of excitement.

All assisted in helping Gray and Blake carry their supplies down to the lake, and in loading the canoes. Little was said while final preparations were being made. All realized that the distance to be covered was short, without need of heroic effort or personal sacrifice. The task needed only common sense. There was an exchange of hand clasps, a few spoken words of farewell—and the quest had begun.

# CHAPTER VIII.

## THE TRAIL TO WEST CANADA LAKE

Here is a story book
Thy father hath written for thee—
Come wander with me, she said,
Into regions yet untrod,
And read what is still unread
In the manuscript of God.

—*Longfellow.*

THE next night found Gray and Blake resting comfortably in an open log camp on the mountain side overlooking Little Moose Pond. During the day they had paddled through Lakes Pleasant and Sacandaga, landing on the sandy beach in Northwest Bay. The Livingstone boys left the two men at the bay, taking the canoes back to Orendaga. When Blake located the trail leading into the heart of the wilderness, the men shouldered their packs and began the long hike to West Canada Lake.

Fawn Lake and Big Brook were soon behind them, and at noon a hasty lunch was eaten on the banks of the Jessup River. It was their plan to camp that night on Sampson Lake, but the shelter on the Little Moose, which they

had found about four o'clock in the afternoon, looked so inviting that Blake proposed a halt, and Gray acquiesced. The guide did not wish Gray to overdo himself on the first day of the journey, and the younger man, though hardened in muscle and capable of great endurance, was glad to ease his heavy pack to the ground.

After a bounteous supper of great northern pike which they caught in the Little Moose, the men sat beside the back-log fire that burned brightly in front of the open camp. Naturally their talk turned on their trip and their anticipations.

"I've been on many a huntin' trip," said Blake, "but this here is a new experience. We'll prob'ly kill somethin' when we need food, but we ain't out t' kill an' nothin' else. We want t' see what's alive—" His voice trailed away into silence.

The sun had dropped behind the mountains, and only the peaks of the Blue Ridge and Potash ranges caught its last bright rays. The deepening grayness of evening covered the valleys, and all of nature prepared to rest for the night. The melodious call of the quail, and later the weird hoot of the owl broke the stillness of dusk. As the crackling and snapping of the fire gave way to a glowing warmth of embers, they rolled up in their blankets and lay down on the fragrant beds of balsam which covered the floor of the camp.

After an hour or more of quiet, Gray whispered, "Are you asleep?"

"No," replied Blake, softly, "I can't go t' sleep fer thinkin' 'bout what we might find t'morrow. Didn't know I owned any nerves 'til I discovered 'em t'night."

"I was just thinking," went on Gray, "about this log camp. Who, do you suppose, went to all the trouble to make it so substantial and complete? Someone surely had an eye for beauty when they picked this spot on the mountain side. The view from this point across the valley and Little Moose Pond is remarkable."

"Whoever 'twas, they sure was lookin' out fer other people," was Blake's rejoinder. "Once heard a feller say that was th' spirit o' th' Adirondacks. Yuh'll find camps like this in heaps o' out-th'-way places."

"Perhaps Louie and the man of the cave built it," suggested Gray.

"Mebbe they did. I know Louie's put up more 'n one camp like this. 'Twouldn't surprise me none 'f he built it so's other folks could use it when they come this way."

"He must know all these lakes, streams and trails the way some of us know the city streets," observed Gray.

"He sure does. His fav'rite spots is on Wes' Canada Lake, though, an' th' Oregon country up th' Kun-ja-muck. We c'n be pretty

sure o' findin' him up this way 'bout now, but I reckon we'll have t' hunt 'round some, first. We'll try t' trace him fr'm his cabin on th' lake. 'F we don't find him thar, we'll go on fer a ways—build our fires whar other folks has camped an' sleep whar balsam beds is already made. We c'n fish an' go explorin' 'round this here region 'til yuh git t' be 'quainted with it. An' every once 'n a while we'll go back t' Louie's cabin. Might meet him thar 'most any time. An 'f he's thar—''

"And if he's there—" repeated Gray. He looked at Blake, just barely visible in the faint glow from the fire. Both men smiled, then settled down in their blankets.

The next morning they were up at dawn, and after a delicious breakfast of broiled fish, bread and coffee, they started down the trail. The air was bracing, full of the tonic of the woods. Wind fragrant with the odor of the tamaracks and balsams swept about them. The sun was warm when it fell through an opening in the trees; in the deeper forest it shone as a misty radiance in the treetops.

Climbing on, over the ever winding trail, Gray reviewed much of his life since he first came to Orendaga. The way was too rough for much talking, and the silence of the woods fostered silence in man. Now and then the raucous call of a crow echoed among the rocks, breaking upon Gray's thoughts fitfully.

Blake led the way over the narrow trail. He was becoming, indeed, a guide in many things to Byron Gray. He was such a superb figure of manhood! Tall, with the graceful proportions of an athlete, there was something of the greatness of nature in his personality. Perhaps it was the sincerity of the man, for, after all, there are fewer traits of character more sublime. His face had a rugged strength, with eyes large and deep under a broad, intelligent brow. A scattering of freckles on his cheeks gave him an expression that was almost boyish.

Rarely enough one finds a man who, unconsciously and without effort, attracts others to himself, and who, in his friendship, draws out the best in the lives of his companions. With such a man one becomes one's truest self, whether in thought, word or deed, for the deepest springs of life are touched by affection.

And so Gray found in Jack Blake something he had never before found in a man. He had many friends in different parts of the world, but his friendship with Blake was unlike any other friendship—he had not felt so strangely affectionate toward a man in many years.

Gray was seeing into Blake more clearly every day. The woodsman was a man of practical vision who saw life at its best. He understood true values, was master of his life's program in as full a sense as he was master of the

lumbermen on the river. Conditions and pressures from the outside world did not change his decisions concerning the essentials of life and the riches that endure.

Gray saw it all. He visualized the two worlds: one, a whirling, struggling welter, an empty bauble when it was taken as the whole of life; the other world he was just beginning to know fully. A vital faith in his fellow man, a keen enthusiasm for life and adventure had gripped his soul. Gray was seeing this new world most fully through Jack Blake, for the lumberman, in his sincerity and integrity, seemed a part of the woods and lakes and sky.

On the two men trudged, following the faint trail which was almost lost to sight at times. It was a bright day and the climbing sun sent bright streaks of light through the forest, revealing the splendid beauty of tree and wild flower. The superb symmetry and perfection of the balsam trees were magnified in the glory of the morning; the delicate grace of the white birch stood out in startling contrast to the sombre pines, surrounded by dogwood and laurel in full bloom. The air was sweetened with the incense offered up on myriad petalled altars. Up hill and through dale they went, never slackening their gait except to climb over a fallen tree or to make certain of the trail.

At noon they reached Sampson Lake, a beautiful body of water backed up by densely

wooded hills rising to a height of two thousand feet. Blake found a flat-bottomed boat in the bay on the southeast shore of the lake, only a few feet from the end of the trail. It was a rough affair, undoubtedly built by someone on a fishing party and then abandoned. The two men found it seaworthy, and, loading their packs in one end, made for the larger of the two islands which lay in the lake. As Blake paddled, Gray made a cast with his fishing line and was rewarded with an immediate strike. By the time Blake had navigated as far as the island, Gray's catch amounted to three pickerel and two perch.

On reaching the island they discovered a lean-to with three bunks which had been recently filled with balsam. A little at one side was a fireplace which looked as though it had been used that morning, or, at the earliest, the evening before. Searching for other signs of the camp's occupancy, they presently discovered that three persons had made up the party who had last been there. Footprints in the sand at the shore caught Blake's eye. The three tracks were very different from each other. Blake pointed out to Gray the marks of a short, stubby foot.

"Louie Lamont!" he said, an eager light shining in his eyes. "I c'd tell it any place!"

With great care they examined the other prints. One betrayed a long, narrow foot that

stepped with a quick movement and a slight push of the heel. The other track was much smaller and shorter.

"Big one b'longs t' a man," said Blake, studying the marks. "That small one's what gits me—couldn't o' weighed more 'n a hundr'd 'n twenty."

"I wonder who it could have been?" asked Gray. "Was it the son of the man with Louie, or possibly the wife or daughter?"

"I'm stuck," said Blake, frankly. "That third track ain't a woman's, er else th' first one ain't Louie's. I've seen him go 'cross th' street er dodge 'round a corner so's he wouldn't have t' meet a woman. This here looks awful funny t' me."

"Time will tell," laughed Gray.

"Dunno 's it will," replied Blake, seriously. "Louie's got a instinct like a bear. He could 've disappeared after he heard us comin' over th' hill."

"Do you think we were that close to them?"

"Dig down int' th' ashes o' th' fire," advised the woodsman. "See 'f thar's any heat."

Gray began to investigate, first lifting off the half burned embers and then scraping away the black coals and ashes beneath.

"There's no heat," he reported, "but the ground is wet—"

"I see," was Blake's comment. "They made sure o' th' fire bein' out 'fore they started.

Prob'ly they didn't know we was comin', an' only wanted t' guard 'ginst forest fire. We might be all wrong, too. Mebbe they come in fr'm th' north b' way o' Saratoga an' Indian Lake. 'F I didn't know fer sure that Louie made that footprint, I might think this here camp was used by some fishin' party or somethin' like that."

"They're pretty good woodsmen, at any rate," said Gray. "There's not even a fish head thrown on the ground. And the wood they didn't need is piled up neatly for the ones who follow them. This Adirondack Park surprises me, Jack. It hasn't anything to make it famous, no hot springs, great mountain peaks, or canyons; there's just commons, woods, hills and lakes. It's a garden of wonder, nevertheless."

"Waal," drawled Blake, "they's thousands o' people as passes it right by 'thout thinkin' o' what you jest mentioned."

"I've been one of the passers-by too, Jack. Do you know, I thought that coming to the Adirondacks was the last bitter dose for me. These hills seemed to me to be like the best place to die off without being bothered by anxious relatives and friends. I've certainly found them a lot different, now that I've stayed long enough to see things as they are, and to get off the beaten path and live next to nature."

Blake nodded in agreement. He had shown

some restlessness since the discovery of the footprints, and now suggested that the journey be continued.

"We'd oughter hurry on t' th' west end o' th' lake. Thar's whar th' trail leadin' t' South an' Wes' Canada Lakes begins. We c'n eat a snack 'fore we start an' save th' fish fer a good meal t'night. 'F we push right 'long we'll be t' Louie's cabin by five o'clock. There ain't much chance o' catchin' up with them that was here, 'less they want comp'ny pretty bad."

"I wish we could meet them," said Gray. "We have fish enough for five, all right."

Blake chuckled. "Don't think yuh'd be off'rin' 'em a treat, with pick'rel an' perch. They prob'ly been livin' on th' fat o' th' land, game in th' woods an' fish in th' ponds."

Gray looked at his catch with a smile. "Just the same," he said, "these look good to me. I'm hungry enough to eat them raw."

"Don't doubt it," agreed Blake, "I'm hungry m'self. But that's th' way in th' woods."

With a final look at the tracks in the sand, Gray and Blake got into the rickety little boat, and soon landed on the farther shore of Sampson Lake.

Leaving the scene of their first clue to the mystery of the Kun-ja-muck Cave, although it had proved a very slender clue indeed, the two men kept up a steady pace over the trail. They had just come in sight of South Canada

Lake when Blake, who was leading, stopped suddenly and held up his hand.

"Thar they go!" he whispered hoarsely, while Gray stopped with a jerk, as though someone had pulled him up with bit and bridle.

For a moment Gray could see no reason for Blake's action. The guide stood, with every muscle tense, peering ahead through the trees. There lay South Canada Lake, quiet and glistening in the afternoon sunlight. They had followed the east end trail, and, standing hidden in the undergrowth, the entire length of the lake was visible. Both shores could be seen with a glance.

Blake motioned for Gray to draw nearer.

"Thar they go!" he whispered again, pointing to the north shore, about half way down the lake.

Gray, peering in the direction indicated by Blake's outstretched arm, saw what he least expected to see—the three persons who had made the footprints on the island.

# CHAPTER IX.

## THE SURPRISE

May every soul that touches mine,
Be it the slightest contact, get therefrom some good,
Some little grace, one kindly thought,
One aspiration yet unfelt, one bit of courage
For the darkening sky, one gleam of faith
To brave the thickening ills of life;
One glimpse of brighter sky beyond the gathering mist
To make this life worth while
And heaven a surer heritage.

AS Gray and Blake stood there silently, side by side, they strained their eyes to make out the three people on the distant shore. It would have been perfectly safe for them to speak in their usual tones, but the sudden apparition startled them. Like a scout of pioneer days, Blake stepped lightly and quickly to the rocky lake shore, motioning Gray to follow. They kept themselves from view and, finding a slight elevation where they could stand behind a large boulder, they watched every move made by the other party, perhaps a half mile away.

They had just stepped from a canoe and were standing on the beach. Suddenly the smallest figure disappeared into the woods, leaving two men, one tall and the other of shorter stature. Picking up a couple of bundles which lay on

the sand, they lay hold of the canoe, carried it into the underbrush, and also went out of sight.

Blake faced his companion. "That's them fer sure," he said, with certainty.

"But just who are they?" asked Gray, more for the sake of saying something than from a desire for information. He was already positive that the campers of Sampson Lake had been revealed to him.

"Too far t' be sure," was Blake's answer, "but 'f I ain't mistaken, that shortest feller was Louie Lamont, th' one that left th' middle size footprints on that island over t' Sampson Lake."

"Yes, but who are the other two?"

"I dunno. Mebbe some city feller an' his son who're goin' t' spend th' summer in th' woods. Or mebbe they been here all winter."

"Someone with shattered nerves or a deep set cough, I suppose," Gray added.

"I don't think so," replied Blake. " 'F a feller's down an' out he can't rough it like that. 'Sides, Louie wouldn't guide everybody. I'm s'prised he'd stick so close to 'em as 'tis."

Blake stood with his eyes on the spot where they had disappeared.

"Can you see anything?" whispered Gray, hoarsely.

"Nope, they're gone, but I was jest thinkin' that if that feller's Louie, he must've changed a heap. Don't seem nat'ral fer him t' be guid-

in' two strangers an' sharin' his camps with 'em th' way he'd have t'. Yuh can't hire him with money, usu'lly, an' he won't take a favor 'less he c'n pay it back double right off."

"Will it be wise," queried Gray, "for us to follow them now, since we are so close?"

"Sure," replied Blake after a moment's thought. "We're doin' th' woods, an' Louie oughter be 's glad t' see me 's I'll be t' see him."

"Then you don't think that the person with Louie is the man of the Kun-ja-muck Cave—and a—companion?"

"I ain't sure o' what t' think," came the reply. "Two people with Louie kind o' busts up our old idees, 'cause th' cave man can't be two. But 'f Louie's protectin' that mysterious feller, I don't see what he'd be doin' with two strangers—totin' 'em 'round whar they'd allers be in th' way. Louie'd nat'rally take th' cave man with him when he moved t' his summer camp."

Gray had a sudden idea. "If one of those people with Louie is the cave man, Jack, we'll be sure to find Louie alone when we catch up with him. If those strangers are ordinary people who have simply engaged Louie as their guide, we'll probably find them together, and there won't be any signs of embarrassment in their party."

"Guess yuh're right," said Blake, quickly.

"We won't say we saw 'em fr'm here, or that we discovered any traces of 'em over t' Sampson Lake. We'll look fer Louie first, an' be glad 'f we see him. 'F we don't 'spect t' find any others we won't be disappointed."

"How do you suppose Louie will receive me, Jack? I've never met him, and he may turn me down hard and cold."

"Waal," deliberated Blake, "ther ain't no tellin'. Yuh've jest got t' wait an' see."

"How would it be for me to give him the little gifts that the Livingstone boys sent him?" proposed Gray. "Then you can give him the messages from them—you know him and can talk more easily with him."

"Good idee," said Blake, "an' it oughter help us t' git in with him."

"If we do find him alone," went on Gray, "why not stay at his cabin if he'll let us, and see if the strangers will show themselves—or don't you think that wise?"

"Leave that t' Louie," laughed the other. "He'll ask yuh t' stay 'f he wants yuh, an' if he don't—yuh might 's well move on. That ol' Frenchman's lived in th' world too long t' be fooled. He'll pertect his friends t' th' las' gasp."

Blake paused and looked out over the lake reminiscently.

"Cal tells a story 'bout Louie," the woodsman continued, "that shows jest how faithful

he c'n be t' them he wants t' pertect. Cal an' Louie was after a deer. 'Twas three years 'go las' November. One of 'em wounded a big buck an' they was follerin' him down th' valley, up west o' Dug Mountain lakes. Cal was goin' t' climb over a fallen tree—'twas late 'n th' afternoon an' th' light wa'n't much good. Waal, jest 's Cal got his foot over th' tree, Louie looked up an' seen a wil' cat on a branch right over Cal's head. Th' critter was jest ready t' spring at Cal when Louie hollers 'Back, Cal!' Waal, jest 's Louie hollers, th' varmint leaps. Louie lifts his gun an' fires quicker 'n a flash—didn't 'pear t' take sight 't all. That wil' cat falls right 'n th' tree trunk whar Cal was standin'—th' critter was deader 'n a doornail, bullet plumb through his heart. He's got a eye like a hawk, that Frenchman, an' 'f he'd fired a secon' later—'' Blake stopped, but the implication was emphatic. "Louie'll stand by them people no matter what we do t' find 'em, an' we got t' play in th' open 'thout tryin' t' take 'vantage of him.''

"Do you think he'd try to conceal anyone except the man of the cave?''

"No,'' replied Blake, "I can't think of anybody he'd want t' hide, 'ceptin' that Kun-ja-muck feller.''

Blake began to pick up the packs they had dropped upon catching sight of the three persons across the lake.

"This here lake's 'bout a mile 'n a quarter long," he observed, an' th' place whar them people landed mus' be 't th' beginnin' o' th' trail t' Wes' Canada Lake. We'll foller this trail 'long th' east side o' th' lake 'til we git whar they landed. 'F we find their boat in th' bushes we'll know they're comin' back this way. 'F it ain't thar we'll know they carried it over t' Wes' Canada Lake an' are goin' up t' Louie's cabin. We'll foller th' same trail an' walk in on Louie after a while."

A few moments later the two were picking their way over the rocks and through the thick underbrush which covered the trail.

They found the entrance to the north trail with little difficulty. Unfortunately, the rocky shore and thick grass hid all tracks. A fruitless search for the boat forced them to believe it had been carried over the trail for use on the other lake.

Following a well defined trail, Gray and Blake went over a long hill, and, for the last half mile, were able to double their speed down the gentle slope. Cautiously they approached West Canada Lake. Carefully scanning the shores for any sign of the party, the men worked down to the water's edge.

"Thar's th' island called Peaceful Haven," said Blake, pointing to a beautifully wooded spot with a rocky and irregular shore. The sun was just setting in a flood of color, and the

deep, rich shadows of the mountains round about made it indeed a haven of peace and of wondrous beauty.

Blake and Gray continued their course along the east trail to a wide bay where they could see beyond the island, along the north shore.

In the fading light they again examined the distant shore. Above the trees to the left of Peaceful Haven Blake discovered a faint line of smoke, and called Gray's attention to it.

"Louie's camp," he said, laconically.

They sat down on a nearby rock, discussed the best place to spend the night, and at length decided to remain where they were. Together they built a rough lean-to, Gray making two bunks under the simple shelter while Blake kindled a fire. Darkness fell upon them quickly, as it does where the mountains cut off the afterglow of the sunset. By the light of a pine torch, Blake prepared the evening meal.

There was plenty to satisfy, and after they had eaten they sat and talked, the flickering light of the torch glowing in their faces. There in the heart of the mountains, where all nature seemed to harmonize, they called up bits of bygone memories. They had been tired, but after the refreshing meal their spirits were quickly revived by the cool evening air.

"T'morrow mornin', 'round dawn, we'd oughter be t' Louie's camp," said Blake. 'F they ain't seen us we might take 'em by s'prise.

Louie c'n see in th' dark like an owl, an' he allers sleeps with one ear open. He knows every sound o' th' woods, an' ain't 'spicious o' nothin' 'ceptin' man. So it'd be best fer us t' meet him by daylight. 'F we c'n s'prise 'em they'll have t' tell us who they be."

Blake described the trail to Louie's cabin, and after raking in the fire they lay down to sleep. The bed of balsam twigs never seemed more welcome to Gray. His double blanket was none too heavy, for night in the heart of the Adirondacks is surprisingly cold. Long after Blake gave signs of being asleep, Gray lay awake. He was too near Louie, and, perhaps, the man of the Kun-ja-muck Cave, to allow his nerves to settle into tranquil repose. His thoughts raced from one thing to another in anticipation of what the morrow might bring. With eyes closed he quietly rested, in a serious attempt to sleep.

Blake was breathing heavily, apparently in deepest slumber. Gray's eyes, however, flashed open frequently. His mind would work quickly for a moment, even amid his best endeavors to sleep. As the hours passed he became less awake.

It was well after midnight, he thought, when he was startled out of his drowsiness by hearing the name of Jack Blake spoken in a sibilant whisper. He sat up in his blankets with a jerk, listening intently for a repetition of the sound.

As the silence of the woods continued unbroken, he realized that his action was folly, that the whisper was no more than the imagination of an excited mind.

The moon had risen and stood over the lake in a halo of beauty. Not a ripple disturbed the surface of the water, and the whole sleeping world was bathed in silvery light. The scene was so wonderful that he was tempted to waken Blake, but after a glance at the slumbering form he thought better of it.

What a stillness creeps over the world that nature rules! There is power in every living thing—growth, movement, light, air—and yet silence reigns, deep and mysterious, in the sublime witchery that is night. Was it the pressure of these active forces, Gray questioned, that called him, for the memory of having heard the name of Jack Blake spoken was stamped upon his mind?

"Must have dreamed it," he said under his breath, and snuggled down into his blanket again, determined to forget even the glorious moonlight.

In the morning Blake awoke first, realizing that he had overslept. Dawn had passed into day. Sitting up, he blinked and looked about. There lay Gray, fast asleep—and nearer to his own bed lay a third person, covered with a heavy blanket!

Although an old-fashioned woolen tam-o'-

shanter covered the newcomer's face, Blake recognized him in a flash, and in another moment was standing by his side.

Before Blake could speak, Louie Lamont turned over and smiled, his big gray eyes speaking volumes.

"Whar'd yuh come from, Louie?" Blake greeted him. "Jest like yuh t' s'prise us when we wa'n't 'spectin' it!" Blake's voice was full of warmth.

Gray heard the first word spoken, and sat up, too much astonished to say a word. Blake glanced at him as much as to say: "We might have known it. You can't get the best of Louie!"

Louie twisted about so as to face Gray more squarely, giving him a friendly smile.

"I come dees camp las' night," said the trapper in his imperfect English, "w'en moon firs' shine on lake." He paused to give a low chuckle. "Dees boy hear me say 'Jack Blake' but t'ink he dream. I lay me down an' mak no noise. He ees ver' mooch worry." The Frenchman chuckled again at the memory.

Blake began to give Louie the messages which had been sent by the Livingstone boys and other villagers, while Gray busied himself with the pack baskets, bringing forth the gifts for the old French trapper.

During Louie's account of how he came and lay down by Blake in the night, Gray had ex-

amined him closely. In the Frenchman's manner he saw nothing of hostility or of unfriendliness, but only good will. Gray found his preconceived ideas slowly disappearing. How far, he wondered, would Louie's friendliness go? Would it lead Blake and himself straight to the heart of the mystery of the Kun-ja-muck, or would Louie become silent as the Sphinx when the mystery was discussed? Gray noticed that Louie was very careful to make no reference to the persons with whom he was seen the afternoon before; and there was a certain reserve in the trapper's manner, a very slight air of secrecy, which made Gray doubt the advisability of asking any questions. Gray stood a little bit in awe of Louie.

He hesitated a moment before approaching Louie with the gifts, then walked over to him with a friendly smile, proffering the few things sent by Bill, Tom and Louie's other friends in Orendaga. There was the bone-handled hunting knife from the boys. Tears came to Louie's eyes as he tested its blade with his thumb, examining it with the careful scrutiny of a woodsman.

"Good boys," he said, shortly.

Cal had sent a box of assorted fishhooks, Isaiah a spool of silk line, Uncle David a red and black plaid shirt, and some of the children a box of candy. There was no mistaking Louie's appreciation. A flush came to that old

bronzed face; his glistening eyes and happy smile spoke the language of his heart. He looked over the gifts again and again, fondling each article until he laid it on top of his pack, which he had hung on a tree nearby, and without saying a word began to prepare breakfast. Jack started the fire while Louie pulled from his basket two partridges, ready for the pan.

As they ate breakfast Louie spoke but little, except to ask a question now and then, or to make some comment on the camp. He seemed as much at home with Gray as with Blake; and Gray, quite to his own surprise, was equally at ease with the Frenchman.

Breakfast was soon over. Each man picked up his pack, Louie leading the way with a brief "Louie tak you camp." Instead of following the shore as they had expected and hoped, he took them to a canoe, the one they had seen him beach on South Canada Lake the previous day.

Louie did not paddle toward his cabin but instead rounded the corner of Peaceful Haven and entered a little bay, where they landed. He escorted them to a comfortable cabin made of rough hewn logs and containing three bunks, two short and one long.

"Thees yore cabane," he said to Gray, after showing the men its interior. Then he led Gray and Blake to a second small cove, a little way up the shore from the first. Uncovering

a canoe, made like the one they had just used, he told them it was theirs.

Pointing to the lake, he said "Good water, ver' mooch feesh. I go now, come back soon." Without further conversation he climbed into his canoe and paddled across the narrow channel to the mainland.

Blake faced Gray with an amused and quizzical light in his eyes.

"Waal, what d'yuh know 'bout that?"

"I believe," replied Gray, "that the man of the cave is over there where Louie's going. And we have about as much chance of meeting him as we have of shaking hands with the man in the moon!"

"Yuh're jest right," said Blake, slowly. "Guess all we c'n do is keep our eyes an' ears open, an' wait 'n see what happens."

"This is certainly strange," mused Gray. "He's very friendly—yet he's the key to the mystery—and he leads us around. We do whatever he wills."

"That's all we can do," said the lumberman with an air of finality. "Thar ain't no other way with Louie Lamont. This here mystery ain't goin' t' be solved in one day."

# CHAPTER X.

## THE ISLAND OF PEACEFUL HAVEN

For God so loved the world, not just a few,
The wise and great, the noble and the true,
Or those of favored class or race or hue.
God loved the world. Do you?

God loved the sinful world, not just the good.
Ah, none were good till they had understood
His love for them, and felt the power that could
Make all of life anew.

God loved the world. He saw that we might be
Made like Himself. He stooped to set us free
And did not spare the cost of Calvary.
God loved man so. Do we?

—*Grace E. Uhler.*

THE island of Peaceful Haven is thickly wooded with virgin pine and balsam, with an occasional feathery tamarack. Clusters of dogwood and sheep laurel, in the loveliness of full bloom, made the underbrush a beautiful mosaic. From the mainland shore it appeared like an isle of dreams. The turquoise of the water reflected every shadow, making the scene a veritable vision of paradise. White birches caught the sunlight in their leaves, then shivered it, an amber radiance, upon their gleaming limbs.

The two friends sat in the old canoe, Blake

in the stern and Gray in the bow, their paddles resting across their knees. The surface of the lake was unwrinkled, a perfect mirror.

"I am convinced there is not a more beautiful spot in all the universe," declared Gray. "It seems to me that the Creator Himself might have made this for His dwelling place."

Blake made no reply, but his silence was one of perfect agreement.

"Every day I see more clearly what Paul Ward means," continued the younger man, "and what Livingstone meant by nature's revelation of God. I knew that poets, dreamers perhaps, had a conception like that, but it always seemed—far-fetched—unreal. Before I came up here I used only to see a valley, or a sunset, or a flower—nothing more. But now there *is* something more—something almost—divine—God-like—" He left the thought unfinished, as though it were a profanation to speak further.

Jack began to dip his paddle silently into the lake, sending the canoe swiftly ahead, cutting a wake of golden ripples which flashed in the sun.

"How did this island get its name?" asked Gray as he stepped out on the white sand beach and helped draw up the canoe. "Peaceful Haven—the name is so fitting."

"It's a kind o' sad story," replied Blake, as he gathered up the paddles, "but it's true. I

met th' feller that named th' island. He lived an' died in our cabin over thar. Come up fr'm th' city—wa'n't spectin' t' live long. He was a 'lectrical engineer, 'f I r'member right. Had a nigger servant that'd been in th' fam'ly fer years. This engineer had plenty o' money, but he'd lost all his friends 'count o' his condition —or anyways he imagined they'd all deserted him. He said he come up here t' git away fr'm th' world an' t' fergit everythin'. Isaiah brought 'em up fr'm Orendaga, an' he says that when they come in off'n th' state road th' engineer tried t' git th' ol' nigger t' go back t' th' city an' leave him t' die alone.

"Isaiah says that ol' nigger jest shook like a leaf an' begged his master t' let him stay with him. 'Ah cain't leab yuh, Massa Rudy,' says th' darkie. 'We got t' trabbel de same road ter-gedah, an' dat road ain't long.'

"Isaiah showed this feller some other places, but this here island was th' only one he liked. Th' darkie helped Isaiah build th' cabin, an' when they had it all done th' nigger looked at it fer a minute an' then calls over an' says, 'Oh Massa Rudy, jes' come an' look here! Dis sure am de Peaceful Haven fer you. It sure am, Massa Rudy!' Isaiah says th' engineer went out t' th' point where th' ol' nigger was stand-in' an' looked 'round 'thout sayin' anythin'. After a while he turns t' th' darkie an' says, 'Joe, yuh've given it th' right name—Peaceful

Haven—an' that's what it'll be t' me an' you fer th' rest o' our days.' So that's how th' island got named."

Gray was not satisfied to have the story end there. "Go on," he said. "How long did they live here?"

"When yuh go back t' Orendaga," said Blake, "yuh c'n ask Isaiah t' tell yuh all 'bout it. He knew 'em well—looked after their supplies an' spent a lot o' time with 'em up here 'til th' end come. We c'n walk up t' th' corner o' th' island an' see whar they're buried, 'f yuh want."

Gray eagerly assented, and in a few moments the men were standing on an elevated point known as Great Rock, beside which there were two graves. A small bronze tablet had been set in the rock, but there were no names or dates recorded—only a single line: "They found that the Peaceful Haven was the gate to Heaven."

The two friends stood in that sacred place, silent. There is in any burial place, and more especially in a plain and simple one, something that stirs reflection upon the ways of God and man. Here, where the winds of heaven blew freely and the sun shone warmly down upon the two rude graves, Gray and Blake felt the mystery that is life and the key to its solution, death.

They walked slowly back to their cabin.

Suddenly Blake looked across the water, and threw up his arm in greeting.

"Thar's Louie, an' his pack basket's full," exclaimed Blake. "I reckon he's goin' t' spend th' night with us."

Louie was paddling like an Indian, erect on his knees in the bottom of the canoe, silence in every dip and force in every stroke. He met them in front of the cabin, stooping under the weight of his pack, which rested snugly on his back. Sliding out of the straps and letting it rest for a moment on his right hip, the trapper swung his basket to the ground.

" 'Bout wan o'clock," he greeted them, after a glance at the sun and shadows.

Gray looked at his watch and said, laughingly, "You're nearly right, Louie. It's ten minutes after one by my watch."

"No good tam," remonstrated Louie. "Jus' wan hour an' not mooch pas'. Grub for t'ree in here," indicating the pack. He began at once to prepare the meal, evidently having come to give Gray and Blake a treat.

"Yuh c'n help Louie," suggested Blake to Gray, "an' I'll git th' fire ready an' fix up th' table."

Each man did his best, but Louie was unquestionably the chef. He unconsciously directed the preparation of the meal, without saying a word. The old trapper had not lost his French characteristics of cleanliness, neat-

ness and a certain sense of style, almost incongruous out in the woods.

The griddle cakes were more than ordinary flapjacks. They were all the same size, well browned, and piled on three birch bark plates which Louie made for the occasion. He brought out a jug of maple syrup, clear as amber, evidently made by himself. Lake trout, which he had caught fresh that morning, were cooked in the deep hot grease, each fish having first been rolled in flour. Baked potatoes and coffee completed the menu. The odors were appetizing enough to have enchanted an epicure. The repast was simple but bountiful; the men ate with gusto, seated on benches placed at a height which enabled them to rest their elbows comfortably on the rough board table.

During the meal, Gray began to understand more completely how baffling was this Louie Lamont. He seemed to be a friendly sort of sphinx. He would describe with sly humor the catching of a fish or the shooting of a partridge, and immediately after would show an unusual pity and tenderness of heart, a naive repentance for his deed not often encountered in a trapper or a hunter. Gray did not have to be told that the Frenchman hated sham and that his natural instinct led him to recognize it just as a fox scents danger. As a friend or guide he was true, dependable, as staunch as an aged

oak which still lifted its leafy crown to the heavens after many a devastating storm. At the same time he stood between the mystery of the Kun-ja-muck and the two who were resolved to solve the mystery as an almost unsurmountable bulwark. For some good reason, as yet hidden to Gray and Blake, Louie was not ready to make them his confidants; and they knew that his motives were not to be questioned or doubted until he himself chose to enlighten them.

When the meal was over, and everything cleaned up and set in order, Louie evinced a desire to linger at the cabin for a little while. So they sat and talked; but not once did the old trapper mention the other persons he was guiding, or protecting, as it seemed to Gray and Blake. It was as if he had made a truce before landing, providing for absolute silence on that score. Gray and Blake felt bound to respect it, as though each had given his solemn oath. All afternoon they talked, Gray telling of things in the outer world, interesting to Blake for the moment only, and understood, strangely enough, by Louie.

That evening after supper, Gray and Blake sat before the back-log fire, discussing their first day on the island of Peaceful Haven. That was all the occupation they seemed to have, for a while, at least. They could take no active steps to discover more about Louie's

companions, lest they defeat their own purpose by some precipitous act unwelcome to Louie, that extraordinary personality which they had not yet been able to fathom. So the two friends bided their time, mulling over their peculiar circumstances again and again, trying to get every possible angle on the possible fulfillment of their quest.

Louie had returned to his camp during the latter part of the afternoon, not inviting them to accompany him. He had, however, left his basket, saying that its contents were for them and that he would provide more when needed.

Gray and Blake were occupying a bench, built for two persons, before the fire. There were three of these rustic seats placed about the cabin, all made in the same unique way. The seats were fashioned of great logs which had been split lengthwise and hollowed out with the ends turned up, something like the form of a canoe. The hollows were deeply cushioned with pine needles, balsam twigs and dried moss. Backs of woven roots made the benches as comfortable as luxurious chairs.

"What d'yuh think 'bout him?" asked Blake, leaning back with a sigh of contentment. He did not mention the name; it was unnecessary, for there was only one "him" connected with their thoughts at that time.

Gray replied in one word, "Fascinating," and fell again into a thoughtful contempla-

tion of the fire. After a moment he rose, pushed the logs closer together, and piled on two or three fresh ones. After the snapping of the fresh wood had subdued he looked about, gazing in several directions as far as the fire light would permit.

Blake sat cross-legged, his hands clasped just below his right knee, puffing slowly at his pipe. He used it only three times a day, once after each meal, and now he was drawing from it a supreme satisfaction. Gray sat down beside him, settled into his corner of the bench, and rested his feet upon the rocks surrounding the open fireplace. Until the last year or so he too had smoked, but was forced to quit when he left the city. He watched Blake, thinking more about the woodsman than of the question asked some time before. He waited to see what Blake would do when his pipe was finished. Not a word was spoken; Blake was deep in thought, his eyes fixed on the flames of the fire. The pipe emptied, he held it in his right hand with his forefinger over the stem and the other three interlocked with his left hand. Gray knew that Blake would not smoke again that evening.

For a long time there was silence.

"Jack," said Gray, quietly.

Blake remained motionless for an instant, then turned suddenly.

"What d'yuh say?" he asked.

"I didn't say anything," Gray laughed. "I just spoke your name. Sorry to interrupt your thought."

"Guess I was int' it kind o' deep," came the reply, with a slow smile. " 'Twa'n't nothin' but a wish 'bout Mat—" He checked himself abruptly. "I'll tell yuh 'bout it sometime," he concluded, and spread out his blankets.

# CHAPTER XI.

## THE CROW AND THE LILY

O star on the breast of the river,
  O marvel of gloom and grace,
Did you fall right down from heaven,
  Out of the sweetest place?
You are white as the thoughts of an angel;
  Your heart is steeped in the sun;
Did you grow in the golden city,
  My pure and radiant one?

Nay, nay, I fell not out of heaven;
  None gave me my saintly white;
It slowly grew from the darkness,
  Down in the dreary night.
From the ooze of the silent river
  I won my glory and grace;
White souls fall not, O my poet,
  They rise to the sweetest place.

THREE days passed without a visit from Louie, but the time was pleasantly spent in fishing, paddling about the lake, and indulging their favorite pastime during those days—talking. They had much in common, although the past experiences of each man differed widely. Their mutual interest in the two mysterious companions of Louie, and in the old trapper himself had been sufficient to weld them together in more than a passing bond of friendship.

Each one could teach the other in a variety

of ways, for their world had been far apart and their interests had embraced two entirely different spheres. Blake was a child of nature, closely associated with the things called commonplace, but which, after all, are the wondrous things of heaven and earth. His thoughts were linked to the Master Mind, the unfathomable Creator of the forest, the hills, and of every living thing. The marvellous animals and insects of the woods, so often deemed insignificant and worthless, were to Blake a source of study and wonderment. Uncle David had been his first teacher in the village school, then the mother of the Inn, both of them overflowing with love for the living things of the woods, streams and lakes. The birds which made the Adirondacks a song paradise in the springtime and early summer were the friends of these teachers, and every child was taught to know nature to the fullest. Then Mattie came into Blake's life; together they had grown up, more as brother and sister than as mere neighbors. She had exerted over him a sweet influence, she who was so fearless, happy, a lover of the beautiful, and a friend to the friendless.

There was also Cameron Livingstone, the artist, who unconsciously left the imprint of his fine personality upon Blake, as upon all with whom he came in contact. Many times the natives of Orendaga had looked out over

the valley at the different light and shadows of morning or evening without seeing anything of the significance Livingstone caught with his brush and transferred to canvas. When the clouds hung low and the mists touched the evergreens on the mountain sides or slept quietly on the bosom of the lake, the artist interpreted the scene in his painting; and only then did the people of Orendaga see and believe that heaven stooped to kiss their village and the valley. From Cameron Livingstone flowed the grateful recognition of God's wonderland. He revealed the Artist Divine, the Master Workman of the ages. Blake, the pupil, looked up to this same Source for strength and was, in his way, a faithful student of the Infinite.

Gray, the university graduate, had found in his talks with Blake that his own world was really the narrower and more superficial of the two. He had limited his conception of the physical universe to "What I know, I believe; what I cannot understand, I disbelieve." But Blake saw a personal Creator as the only reasonable explanation of the physical universe, and that faith in Him placed man's life on a sure footing. Gray was growing into Blake's belief more and more as their friendship became stronger. Peaceful Haven was now contributing generously to Gray's broader vision of life, and he was beginning to see these mountains and lakes as the garments of God.

Gray and Blake had talked a great deal of Louie as they sat before their evening camp fires in the mellow dusk; they wondered how soon he would return and what was to be the solution of the mystery. More and more they felt powerless to cross his will, knowing that defeat lay in any action contrary to the old trapper's wishes.

"Louie Lamont is a natural born diplomat," said Gray one evening. "There's more courtesy and kindness in his makeup than I ever expected to find."

"He's all o' that, an' more," agreed Blake. "Durin' th' las' few years even th' animals have become his friends. He's as thoughtful t' them as he is t' us. He's a wise ol' bird, too."

"You just bet he is," was Gray's rejoinder. "I thought, before I knew him, that there was a way of cutting across this mystery—but there isn't. An accident may show us the whole thing, but otherwise we'll have to wait. The man of the cave is two, apparently, and two are harder to hide than one—"

"He says he's goin' t' take us t' his cabin, though—"

"Some day," finished Gray with a chuckle. "Well, that'll help. We have all summer—"

"We'll need it," observed Blake grimly.

"Our presence here on this island," continued Gray, "is pretty good proof of his ability to sidetrack us. He's outgeneralled us in

everything. He must have foreseen our plan to surprise him."

Gray reflected a moment before continuing. "Do you know, Jack," he said presently, "I'm nearly as much interested in seeing how Louie's going to carry this along as I am in the mystery of the cave. He's the key to the whole thing, and he's simply playing with us, fighting for time to hide those whom he's protecting."

"An' at th' same time he's a perfect friend to us," broke in the other. "Th' trouble is that them other people've got first claim on him. 'S far as friendship goes, we ain't got any business buttin' into his secrets—but he's th' key t' that mystery, jest 's yuh say."

The two men revealed strong features as they sat before the coals, Gray leaning against a stone with one leg outstretched on the earth, his other knee bent, with his hands clasped around it. A gray flannel shirt and soft corduroys were moulded to the athletic lines of his body. Blake, with his finely proportioned largeness, sat tailor fashion, his back against a tree and his pipe clasped between his fingers.

"Guess we must be goin' t' learn somethin' 'bout this myst'ry," said the woodsman after a long silence. " 'F we wa'n'a, we wouldn't 've got this close."

"But the only reason he's keeping us here is to put distance between us and those other people."

"Waal, we wouldn't 've got 's far 's this 'f Louie was like he used t' be." Blake half closed his eyes in reminiscence. "Them folks o' th' Kun-ja-muck Cave must've changed him an awful lot. Why, all th' game-wardens in th' county was scared t' death of him. Law wa'n't nothin' t' him, an' he jest broke 'em right an' left 'thout nobody sayin' a word. 'Fore this Kun-ja-muck business got started, three year ago, that trapper slaughtered everythin' he saw. But he ain't like that any more. Lucky fer us he ain't, too," added Blake.

"This game is certainly fascinating," declared Gray, enthusiastically. "I want to see how he's going to manage it."

"He's managin' us th' same way he does his pets," said Blake with a short laugh.

"I'd like to see the two pets he had in the canoe that day we saw him," suggested Gray.

Blake laughed again. "You an' me both," he said.

Long streams of golden light were breaking through the clouds, suffusing the lake in a mellow light, as Gray sat up in his bunk the next morning. To his surprise there was a fire burning in the stone fireplace in front of the cabin and the smoke curled its way through the pines, drifting to the east as a current of air swept down between the mountains. The coffee pot was over the flames and the pleasing aroma of fresh meat came to Gray's nostrils.

Blake lay sound asleep; and Gray did not have to guess to know who was preparing breakfast. Without awakening his companion, he stepped to the door and looked out.

The table was set for three, but not a soul was in evidence. He looked down the path leading to the lake; no one was visible there either. Turning back into the cabin to dress, he saw Louie's face, wreathed in a friendly smile, appear in the window opposite him. On one of the trapper's shoulders perched a crow and on the other a flying squirrel.

"Good morning, Louie!" called Gray in surprise, and at his words Blake awoke with a start.

"What d'yuh know 'bout that!" he exclaimed. "Whar d'yuh git them animals?" not so much in question as in admiration.

Louie only replied, with a sage nod, "Bon jour, ev'r'body ees ready for breakfas'? We go to Brook Trout Lake w'en we have eat'. Louie show you ver' good feesh in zat lake. I stay seex days, I t'ink."

"That's fine," said Blake. "We hoped yuh'd come 'round 'fore long."

Louie's pets were particularly interesting to Gray as they stayed close to the trapper, the crow waiting to be served from Louie's own plate while the squirrel helped himself to nuts which he found in his master's pocket. Each

knew Louie's chatter and obeyed him quickly as he went about his work.

"Listen to the jabbering of that crow," said Gray to Blake. "He sounds almost human—and says more in a minute than Louie would in an hour."

"If we only knew crow talk, we might gain some information about the mystery over there," said Gray in a low voice. He looked in the direction of Louie's camp. Blake nodded assent, for they were both quite sure that the two pets were familiar with the strangers whom Louie was guarding.

The bird sat on Louie's shoulder at the moment, reaching around in front of the man's face. In its mouth was a beautifully colored leaf which seemed not to interfere with the bird's chattering. "Take it, take it, here is something for you, Louie, take it," the crow seemed to insist. Louie went on about his work without paying attention to his friend's appeals and loving devotion. As his master did not accept the gift, the crow poked the leaf inside his flannel collar and, after making sure it was safely deposited, flew here and there, inspecting Gray and Blake, warily at first, and then with perfect familiarity. The bird's absence of fear and complete trustfulness were surprising. To their amusement he sat for some time on the back of one of the seats and attempted to carry on a conversation with them.

His head turned first on one side and then on the other, and he broke his chatter as if into sentences, stopping occasionally for his hearers to make comment or to laugh, as they both did.

"Remarkable," said Gray. "I've never seen anything to equal it."

Blake was greatly amused. "We call them crows common," he said, "but it 'pears t' me like they had some brains. Some fellers 'round here have studied crows, an' they say that th' birds c'n talk t' each other easy. They c'n tell when thar's any danger, too, an' they give th' signal t' their c'mpanions."

"I wish we knew what he's trying to tell us," said Gray fervently.

" 'F we did," replied the other, "it'd be a heap o' satisfaction."

"Here comes Louie; ask him to interpret for us," suggested Gray.

Blake called to the trapper to come over. "Tell us what this here crow's sayin', will yuh, Louie?" he asked laughingly.

Louie stood listening to the bird's talk for several minutes, his head cocked on one side. When the crow's chatter ceased momentarily, he said, "Nigger talk too mooch, all ze tam. Good t'ing he no spik Engleesh—he tell all w'at he know."

Gray and Blake looked at each other and smiled. Louie, meanwhile, walked over and picked two daisies from the side of the path,

leaving the stems rather long. He called the bird with a peculiar little chirp, placed the flowers in its beak, and said: "Va, va," adding a few sentences in rapid French, and pointing in the direction of his cabin over on the point.

The bird sat for a moment with head turned to one side, as if in thought, and then flew with a sudden whirr in the direction Louie had indicated. Up, up, over the lake, then above the highest trees it quickly soared, straightening out on its course to the cabin like a homing pigeon. The three men watched it disappear from sight. Gray and Blake stood speechless, for Nigger's stunt was indeed surprising. Noticing the wonderment on their faces, Louie spoke.

"Nigger no stay long tam, he come back to me ver' soon."

The squirrel jumped to the top of Louie's head as though he too were making ready to leave for the mysterious rendezvous. He sat up facing in the direction which Nigger had taken, pawing the air with his forefeet.

"Just look at those black eyes!" exclaimed Gray, calling Blake's attention to the animal. "They almost speak to us."

Louie reached up and lifted his pet from his head, letting it stand in the palm of his hand.

"Voila, he ees a beauty," said the Frenchman, caressingly. "He love me, an' I love heem too. Bad sometam' an' want to stay up

all ze night—sleep all ze day. But he love me, M'sieu. Cry w'en I go 'way, an' w'en I come back he seeng an' run all 'roun'."

"Thar comes Nigger," exclaimed Blake as he glanced out over the lake. "He's comin' fast, too."

"See how he holds to a straight line," Gray pointed out. "He's still got the daisies in his bill."

"Eet ees not daisies," said Louie as the bird came nearer. "Somet'ing else."

Straight as a die the crow flew to Louie and alighted on his shoulder. In his bill was a tiny water lily, fresh and beautiful. It had evidently just been pulled from the lake.

Nigger pushed his head forward and dropped the flower into Louie's outstretched hand. The trapper smiled as the bird chattered excitedly. Lifting the lily to his lips, he inhaled its fragrance and then handed it to Gray with a courtly gesture.

"A vous, M'sieu," he said, an odd smile on his face.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE KING'S CHAIR

I know not what this man may be,
Sinner or saint; but as for me,
One thing I know, that I am he
That once was blind, and now I see.
—*Hay.*

IN amazement Gray took the flower from Louie's weather-beaten hand. His face showed consternation even as he thanked Louie for his graciousness. The old trapper enjoyed his new friend's confusion, his eyes twinkling.

"Not me, M'sieu," he said with an air of mystery. "Some tam you mus' t'ank mon angel, ze queen." He studied Gray's face intently.

"The queen," repeated Gray, puzzled. Blake was listening in wonderment, but apparently did not understand the significance of Louie's words. "And—who is—the queen?" went on Gray, haltingly.

"Mordieu, ma frien', she ees ze queen of ze woods. Ah, M'sieu, she ees like ze flower! You know her some tam, mais not now." With a snap of the fingers and a little chirp, dismissing the subject for the time, he invited the crow and squirrel to follow him to breakfast.

In a moment he called the two mystified men to their morning meal. They had not spoken a word since his revelation of a woman in the mystery. They were astonished, and, as they moved toward the table, they glanced at each other, each trying to read the thoughts of the other. Mechanically they took their usual seats. Gray still held the lily in his hand; he looked vacantly about the table as if uncertain where to lay it. Old Louie smiled at their serious expressions and air of bewilderment.

"W'at, you 'ave not ze honger! No desire Louie's trout, cafe, hot beescuit an' flap-jack! Sapré! You no eat I give heem to Nigger an' Freeskey!" He seemed quite offended, but a roguish twinkle in his eyes belied his words.

"Why, I'm always hungry, Louie," replied Gray, abstractedly, while Blake, beginning to see the humor of the situation, laughed heartily at Gray's blank face. The woodsman started to eat the food Louie had prepared. Gray merely sat in his seat and stared at Blake.

"Waal," said Blake, "why don't yuh leggo that flower an' grab your share o' th'eats? Stick th' lily down th' maple syrup jug er heave it int' th' water bucket—yuh can't eat it!"

Gray succeeded in bringing a smile to his face, realizing what a foolish procedure it was to allow the breakfast to be consumed before his very eyes without sharing it himself. He laid the flower beside his plate. Blake con-

tinued to make fun of his abstraction, but Gray paid little attention.

The Frenchman stood at the end of the table with a long fork in his right hand and a frying pan in the other, a half smile lingering on his face. His quick eye took in the situation. He seemed to understand the hidden secrets of their minds. Without further comment, however, he sat down to eat with them, Nigger and Friskey taking a very noticeable part in both the meal and the conversation.

When they had finished, the pack baskets were quickly made ready. Blake was accustomed to this kind of life and mode of travel. He therefore acted as Louie's assistant in packing the necessary supplies. Gray, in the meantime, had again picked up the lily and stood with it clasped in his hand, awaiting further orders. When he saw that Louie packed no dishes or cooking utensils and stowed the blankets away in the cabin instead of fastening them up in rolls for carrying, he ventured to ask the reason. Blake explained that all of Louie's lodges contained the things necessary for common use.

Everything being ready, Louie closed the door of the cabin on the island of Peaceful Haven. Blake observed Gray's close watch of Louie's movements. As the younger man appeared to be interested in every act of preparation, even to the extent of forgetting the lily,

Blake decided to satisfy Gray's curiosity more fully.

"Th' doors o' Louie's cabins ain't hardly ever locked," vouchsafed the guide. "Day or night, don't make no diff'rence, 's long's Louie's anywhar in th' region his shacks is allers wide open. Th' work's all done up 'fore Louie leaves th' place, an' every dish 's right whar it oughter be. Them cups that hang fr'm th' swingin' shelves over th' table, an' th' nails fer th' fryin' pans 're located in th' same order in every cabin he uses. Same with th' matches, lanterns, axes, an' guns—they're allers on th' same peg or in th' same notch on th' log. That's how Louie feels 's much 't home in one place 's t' other."

After Blake's explanation, Gray's mind returned momentarily to the lily. He carefully placed it in the pocket of his lumberman's shirt, and then apparently dismissed the subject from his mind. The two friends helped Louie to clean up the grounds, and were shown where to place the bits of bread which were dropped or left over. These, with fish bones and other leavings from the meal, were not cast on the fire, but were placed in a selected spot down the path where the birds could easily find them.

Each man shouldered his own pack basket; Louie had increased his own pack with extra supplies, of food only, according to Blake.

Gray had noticed that Louie's last act before leaving the cabin was to examine the outside fireplace, making sure that there were no live embers. Throwing a pail of water on the blackened wood, the old trapper glanced around and then started off with a light step and a quick movement. He led the way down the path to the lake, where two canoes were pulled up on the shore. Gray followed while Blake brought up the rear.

The canoes had once been painted a light green, much like the foliage on the lake shore, but they were now dingy and weather-beaten. Louie took one, piling into it all the pack baskets; Gray and Blake followed the old French trapper in the second canoe.

They were soon moving down the lake, Louie a short distance in the lead. Their paddles lifted from the water in unison, scarcely breaking the silence. The water was like glass, reflecting the canoes, the rocks and trees along the shore, and the blue sky patched with white clouds above. Presently Gray and Blake swung their canoe around to the south that they might get a better view of the shadows along the shore. Gray's eyes turned toward Louie's cabin on the mainland, wherein lay the mystery they hoped to solve.

Louie's "queen" made the mystery more exciting to Gray now, and his desire to pierce the veil of secrecy surrounding her was deep-

ening momentarily. His hand strayed to the pocket where he had placed the lily; he made certain that it was still there. For several minutes he sat, the paddle resting across his knees and his mind on the "queen of the woods."

As Gray's unseeing eyes were fastened, it seemed to Blake, on infinity, it remained for the old woodsman to discover two persons on the shore. One was seated in the King's Chair, a great throne of rock fashioned by nature and standing on the east shore of the lake where a narrow neck of land connected it to an island. This great rock, only a little way from Louie's cabin, afforded a magnificent view of the lake and the surrounding mountains. Blake shaded his eyes and gazed intently. Louie's mysterious companions were not trying to conceal themselves, certainly, for they could not have chosen a more conspicuous place.

"Look, Gray!" said Blake, in an excited undertone. "Thar they be!"

Gray started and craned his neck in several directions before Blake had time to explain.

"At th' King's Chair!" called Blake, pointing. "Both of 'em 're watchin' us!"

Gray rounded his hands as he put them to his eyes, looking through the openings as he would through a pair of field glasses.

"Yes, there are two of them," he ejaculated, "one in the chair and the other standing beside it—and we are paddling away from them, go-

ing—after—trout." He sighed regretfully. "They're the ones we're after, too. Look, Jack! One is standing up in the chair, waving something!"

"Wavin' t' us er Louie?" wondered Blake.

Turning to see where their companion was they found that he, also, had changed the direction of his canoe until his bow pointed directly toward the King's Chair. He sat in the stern, and with his paddle lifted as high as he could reach, he revolved it slowly in the sunlight, as though giving signals in some peculiar code. He was answered by the waving of a white flag. Louie did not conceal his interest in those at the King's Chair. As Gray and Blake paddled up to him he turned to them with a smile.

"I jus' say au revoir, ma frien'. Nigger go back some tam, I t'ink."

Nigger and Friskey sat on the same pack basket, the crow chattering excitedly as though telling a long and interesting story. Friskey, with a nut between his paws, was singing to himself, punctuating the melody with his ceaseless movements.

As Louie again faced his canoe about and commenced paddling with his usual energy, Blake fell in behind him. Gray did not paddle at once, but cast a final long look at the King's Chair. "I wonder which is the woman," he said, under his breath.

The extreme west end of the lake was soon

reached. There they were forced to carry the canoes a little way off the trail, back under the shade and shelter of the trees, since their journey must be continued on foot. Louie glanced back toward the King's Chair as he struck off along the trail, and Gray, following his glance, saw that the two persons had disappeared.

It was a scant half mile from West Canada Lake to Brook Trout Lake, which was Louie's show place for beauty and fishing. As Gray looked down from the trail to the waters of this lake, his whole being was filled with enthusiasm, so entrancing was the spot. In the morning light the lake seemed as blue as the heavens above; its occasional ripples sparkled like diamonds in the sun. There was a constant succession of splashes as trout leaped above the surface, testifying to Louie's statement that the lake was alive with fish.

Two rowboats, old and scabby on the outside but water-tight nevertheless, were brought to light by Louie. The three men rowed lazily down the lake, which was not more than a half mile long. As they drew near the northern point of the lake they saw two deer gazing quietly at them. The creatures suddenly disappeared into the dense woods at the water's edge. The sight of the deer apparently reminded Louie that it was lunch time, for he called a halt and prepared a hasty meal.

During the afternoon, they reached Mud Bay, a sort of narrow lagoon at the far end of the lake. Here were many deer tracks, as well as two distinct trails, one leading south and the other rising higher on the slope near the shore, threading the woods to the north and east. Following the latter, Louie soon led Gray and Blake to a cabin on a cliff which jutted out over the water.

The old trapper left his companions with the packs at the front door, disappeared behind the cabin, and quickly returned with the key.

"I lock heem good," he said by way of explanation. "Eet ees long tam w'ile I am away."

When the evening meal was over and the pets fed, Louie seated himself on a log at the edge of the cliff. The cloud shadows were chasing each other across the water as they often do in the early evening. Louie motioned the two men to sit beside him, one on either side. There they remained for some time in silence.

Nigger had found a sheltered roosting place for the night; Friskey, perched on Louie's knee, was begging for a nut.

Here it was that Gray and Blake were to learn why Louie had brought them to Brook Trout Lake, that sheet of water which lay like a magic carpet at their feet, dyed with a hundred iridescent colors.

The old French trapper was plainly retracing trails of long ago; his eyes were dreamy with retrospection. Gray knew that Louie, if given time, would find words to make clear the meaning of his invitation to sit beside him. Blake's less sensitive mind did not at once catch the significance of Louie's far-off look. His black eyes gazed on; occasionally they came to rest upon the tall grass reeds that rimmed the bay below. Once or twice he had inspected the shore line of the lake, his expression unchanging.

Could a pioneer of olden times have watched more intently for the red man, thought Gray, as Louie's face lost its appearance of idle contemplation and evinced a quiet watchfulness? Blake became more interested in Louie's peculiar silence, adopting Gray's look of expectancy. Louie stirred gently and lifted his head, as if about to open the subject which seemed to fill the depths of his own soul.

# CHAPTER XIII.

## THE OLD TRAPPER'S STORY

A Persian fable says: One day
A wanderer found a lump of clay
So redolent of sweet perfume
Its odors scented all the room.
"What art thou?" was his quick demand.
"Art thou some gem from Samarcand,
Or spikenard in this rude disguise,
Or other costly merchandise?"
"Nay: I am but a lump of clay."
"Then whence this wondrous perfume—say!"
"Friend, if the secret I disclose,
I have been dwelling with the rose."
Sweet parable! And will not those
Who love to dwell with Sharon's rose,
Distill sweet odors all around,
Though low and mean themselves are found?
Dear Lord, abide with us, that we
May draw our perfume fresh from thee.

GRAY and Blake stirred slightly as Louie opened his mouth to speak; but instead of the revelations they had anticipated, he only pointed down the lake shore with a silent gesture. At the point where the Indian River has its source they saw the reason for Louie's motion. Just by the edge of the wood a graceful buck was standing, his antlers lifted high and his nose pointed straight toward the cliff on which the men were seated.

"Watch heem," whispered Louie, almost in-

audibly. "He scent us an' stan' on guard, before he let ze doe an' wan, maybe two, fawns come out from ze wood. He try to protec' hees famille—"

The trapper's companions said nothing, but sat tensely watching the deer and listening to Louie's interpretation of its movements. Cautiously the buck approached the water's edge and, after looking up and down the lake, gave his head a toss. Out from the woods came a doe and her two fawns. She too scented danger and was unwilling to enter the water for a little while. She would not let the fawns go further than the edge of the forest; when they persisted in following her, she nosed them back. The third time she drove them back with positive determination, and they obeyed.

"Voilà! Voilà!" exclaimed Louie faintly. She know! Sapré! she know we here, an' she no trus'. Zat ees why I call you venez ici. I t'ink maybe we see deer an' oder animals from ze cleef."

Gray barely repressed an exclamation of disappointment at the tenor of Louie's words. Apparently the hoped for explanation was not in the old trapper's mind that evening. They waited, however, with unabated interest; perhaps Louie would give them an opening for questions.

"Mon Dieu!" suddenly broke out Louie, his mind still on the scene they had just witnessed

at the water's edge. "Wan tam I wait wit' ze gun, an' I keel heem—" He lapsed into silence for a brief space. "I set ze trap, too, an' get ze animal—mais Louie trap no more—an' he only shoot w'en he need to eat." He finished in an undertone, as if to himself alone.

Gray, alert for a chance to ask a leading question, ventured a suggestion.

"Most hunters and trappers grow more cruel the longer they follow the trail. How is it that you do not, Louie?"

The trapper answered hesitatingly. "He tol' me—she teach me."

"Who d'yuh mean, Louie?" interrupted Blake, leaning nearer that he might catch every word.

The reply was hard for Louie to formulate, but he finally looked up, his stern old face lighting with a cryptic smile, and said, "You know some day, ma frien', not now."

He rose and poked the fire into a bright blaze.

"I was goin' tol' you," he said as he resumed his place, "w'y I set ze trap no more."

" 'Bout two year ago las' winter," interrupted Blake again, "th' men down t' Orendaga noticed that th' only furs yuh brought down was fisher, marten, an' mink. They was all shot, too—none of 'em trapped like they used t' be. We was wonderin' how it come that yuh didn't trap no more."

"Oui, oui," replied Louie. "I 'ave only wan half so mooch skeens, mais they was ver' good, beauteeful, an' I get mooch money."

"You must have spent many weary hours watching for those animals," suggested Gray. "Isn't it easier to let the traps do the work while you're sleeping?"

"Mordieu, ma frien'!" cried Louie. "Eet ees not so easy. I no can look in ze eyes of animal now. Long tam 'go eet was no trouble, mais, tout à fait, eet ees now impossible. Ol' tam, mon 'eart was lak stone, an' I no look in ze eyes. I want not'ing but ze fur, an' I get ver' mooch money for heem. I 'ave nevaire realize w'at eet ees for animal to suffer—an', enfin, I learn from zose people."

The old trapper paused, as if searching for words to convey what he wished to say.

"I learn w'at love ees," he continued after a time. "I learn zat eet ees cruel w'en I trap ze animal. In little w'ile I feel ze gran' peety. Sometam w'en I get wan in ze trap I hear ze leetle wans cry, 'way off in ze wood, an' ze wan in ze trap, she try to get loose, mais she ees not able.

"I trap ze otter mooch in ol' tam, an' ze las' wan w'at I catch, eet ees change me. Sapré! M'sieu, ze mot'er ees in ze trap an' two leetle wans lie on ze side of ze trap. I hear heem cry way 'cross ze valley, an' w'en I come ze mot'er ees goin' die, she ees si weak. She was in ze

trap firs' by ze two fron' feet, an' she 'ave chew wan foot loose. Mais ze strengt' ees no more an, ze leetle wans ees starve. She lif' up ze head wit' ze eyes close'. In leetle w'ile she open ze eyes—ah, mon Dieu, she look si sof' an' sweet—an' she leeck ze face for ze wan leetle otter on wan side, an' après, she leeck ze face for ze secon' leetle otter. I come close an' strike ze mot'er on ze head vit' ze gun. Sapristi! I feel mon 'eart go down, way down lak ze stone in ze water. Ze ol' wan, she 'ave regard ze leetle wans wit' si gran' love!"

Louie paused again. The remembrance was painful to him.

"An' ze otter, she move no more—she ees dead, mort! Ah, M'sieu, I trap ze animal not any tam no more. I see ze otter play an' laugh many tam w'en she slide down ze bank to ze water, jus' lak chil'ren au village. Eet give me mooch plaisir, all w'at I want. I tak ze two leetle otter w'at I am tell you about, I tak heem chez moi, to mon cabane on Kun-ja-muck Reever. I keep heem so long w'ile he leeve."

Gray and Blake had listened to Louie's story as though spellbound.

"And you have them for pets?" asked Gray, almost in a tone of incredulity. "Will they know you when you go to your cabin on the Kun-ja-muck?"

"Mais oui," replied the Frenchman quickly. "An' w'en I 'ave need ze feesh, I take heem

to Owl Pon', maybe Dug Mountain Lake, an' zat ees w'ere we catch ze feesh! W'en I catch wan feesh, ze otter catch t'ree, an' breeng heem to ze boat an' t'row heem in basket w'en I hol' eet. You come see, wan day, maybe. I geeve you good dinner wit' trout zat Weenkie an' Bleenkie catch."

Gray's and Blake's eyes met at the trapper's last words. Their attention had been brought back to the Kun-ja-muck and the mystery which clothed every mention of the place. They wondered if Louie, in his enthusiasm, had offered more than he meant.

"When d'yuh 'spect t' go back?" enquired Blake.

"Quel jour eet ees now?" returned Louie, evidently having lost track of the days and weeks. "I am voyageur in ze wood," he continued, "an' some tam I no remember ze mon'."

"I fergit 'em once 'n a while, too," said Blake. "This here's th' second o' August, ain't it, Gray?"

Gray reflected for a moment, and then agreed.

"Bien! We mus' return in ze meedle of September, maybe," said Louie.

"What d'yuh mean by 'we,' Louie?" Said Blake, quickly. His smile disarmed whatever of impertinence the question might have suggested, but Louie drew himself up and spoke sharply.

"W'at you mean, 'we'?"

"Yuh said 'we,' Louie," replied Blake, evenly. He looked to Gray for support. "Didn't he, Gray?"

"That's right, Louie, you said 'we,' " agreed Gray with some embarrassment.

Louie shot a piercing look at both the men. Then his tenseness relaxed.

"Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed with a curious smile. "I mean me an' Nigger an' Freeskey."

"We thought you meant that we were going to stay with you until you went back to the Kun-ja-muck," lamely explained Gray.

"No, no, ma frien'. I am stay here seex day, mais I 'ave mooch to do. You an' Jack come Kun-ja-muck in Septem' an' see Weenkie an' Bleenkie an' ev'ryt'ing. Scenty—voilà ma beauty!"

"Scenty, what's that?" asked Blake.

Louie laughed lightly, but became serious in an instant.

"Scenty, he ees mon gendarme. He guard mon cabane w'en I go on ze trail."

Gray looked at Blake as much as to ask if here were another mystery to solve. Louie seemed to enjoy their puzzled expressions.

"Scenty, M'sieu, he ees w'at you call ze skunk!" Then, pointing down Brook Trout Lake toward the spot where they had seen the deer earlier in the evening, he suddenly cried, "Look! Là bas!"

The buck, his doe, and the two fawns were

standing knee deep in the water, browsing on the tender grass and lily pads near the shore. Every few moments they would raise their heads to make certain of their safety, while the fawns played together close to their mother. It was indeed a picture of peace and contentment as their graceful bodies bent now and then for a more distant bit of green.

"Ma queen 'ave tol' me zat le bon Dieu 'ave made heem," said Louie reverently, and went into the cabin.

Louie divided the work of preparing breakfast the next morning. Gray brought water from the spring and set the table, while Louie and Blake built the fire and made ready the food. The men had filled their baskets with trout the day before; Louie cleaned the fish, rolled them in flour, and dropped one after another into a pan of hot grease. Soon he lifted them out, well browned, with the meat showing white and flaky in spots. Potatoes were boiled with their jackets on, then were carefully drained and steamed until they popped open and the skin rolled back. They were a favorite dish with Louie. The fish and potatoes, with Louie's hot stirred bread and rich, clear coffee, made up the menu.

Gray ate with considerable gusto, not speaking until he had sampled everything on the table.

"This meal and my own appetite," he ob-

served, with his mouth full, "remind me of what Mattie prophesied—that my appetite then, compared to what it would be in the woods, was 'only a symptom.' "

Louie's face lighted up at the mention of Mattie's name.

"I wish they was all here," said Blake, his mind on Orendaga and those in the little village.

Louie did not venture to express himself openly, but simply added that "ze chil'ren lak ol' Louie."

"Mattie and some of the older people would like to see you too, Louie," said Gray.

"No, no," insisted the trapper, "jus' ze chil'ren."

"Wouldn't you like to see the Livingstone boys?" asked Gray.

"Good boys," replied Louie. "Work hard all ze tam. I lak heem ver' mooch."

"Waal, Louie," said Blake, "what d'yuh say t' bringin' 'em up th' Kun-ja-muck with us 'long in September? Them boys ain't been on th' river since their father died."

Gray took up the appeal, for both men knew that the Livingstone boys could help them to win Louie's complete confidence and trust, so necessary in solving the mystery of Kun-ja-muck Cave.

"They'd give anything to see Nigger and Friskey, and your other pets," urged Gray.

Louie yielded. "You tell heem Louie want heem come on ze Kun-ja-muck nex' mont' w'en you come." Then he stood looking fixedly at Gray and Blake, studying the effect of his next words. "Breeng ze boys, ze mot'er, an' Mattie, sometam." His voice rose until it brought fullest emphasis on the last word.

"Thank yuh, Louie," was Blake's sincere reply.

He and Gray felt it to be another step in solving the mystery.

# CHAPTER XIV.

## THE BEAR CAVE ON KITTY COBBLE

Have ye looked for sheep in the desert,
For those who have missed their way?
Have ye been in the wild waste places,
Where the lost and wandering stray?
Have ye trodden the lonely highway,
The foul and darksome street?
It may be ye'd see in the gloaming
The print of my wounded feet.

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere he found his sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert he heard its cry—
Sick and helpless and ready to die.

AFTER an early breakfast the next morning, the three men put the cabin in order and made ready to leave the cliff. Louie locked the door and again disappeared behind the building to deposit the key safely in its hiding place.

Each man shouldered his pack and, with the Frenchman leading the way, they followed the trail directly north from Brook Trout Lake. At first the way was steep as it led among hills with here and there an overhanging cliff. The summit of the trail was quickly reached, however, and the more gradual descent on the other side gave Gray a chance to get his bearings

and recover his breath. Cool and refreshing was the morning air; the sun had risen high enough to strike the hills across the valley to the north, kissing them with a Midas touch. The valley was rather dark, as it was yet in the shadow of the hills round about.

They had come out on a bold point where the trail dropped directly over a rocky ledge before entering the woods again. Gray was much too interested in the scene to speak; and after a few minutes of mute admiration Louie struck off into the valley below. It was a hike of but one mile from the camp on Brook Trout Lake to the lean-to which Louie had built several months before at the mouth of a slender stream. He had used it as a place of shelter during the autumn hunting season. Laying their pack baskets on the only shelf which the rough shack boasted, Gray and Blake followed Louie along the shore to a little point on the west side of the lake. After looking about for a few moments, the old trapper parted the bushes and weeds in search of something, which his companions rightly guessed to be a boat.

"Voilà!" chirped Louie. "I 'ave ze bateau. We feesh on ze lake unteel noon."

It was an old brown Adirondack skiff, pointed at both ends, and it contained three seats and a pair of hand-made oars. Gray, looking through the bushes as Louie held them aside, saw that the boat rested on several logs

so that it was well off the ground, and was tipped against a tree at such an angle as to protect it from storms. Its concealment had been made sure by the strips of bark and pieces of brush which lay on and about it.

Louie, as usual, insisted on taking the oars. They were soon entering a bay at the northwest corner of the lake.

"Thees w'ere we catch small mout' black bass," vouchsafed Louie. "So, ma frien', mak ready for mooch plaisir an' some good meat."

He had come well prepared for this bit of fishing, as his bait can yielded up small frogs, crawfish, white grubs, angleworms, and a few grasshoppers.

"Eet ees ver' fonee feesh here," said Louie, explaining his many different kinds of bait. "Some tam ze feesh lak wan bait, some tam somet'ing else. I t'ink maybe bass tell ozer feesh w'at kin' bait he ees eat zat day. He say 'grubs to-day' an' bass don' eat not'ing else. Some tam eet ees crawfeesh. Bien, eet ees ver' fonee!"

"What kind of bait will it be to-day?" asked Gray in rather a doubtful tone. To his mind, grasshoppers, or whatever bait he might find successful, were just as good one day as the next.

"Soon fin' out," replied Louie, a twinkle in his eyes.

He baited his own hook with a crawfish,

handing Gray a grub and Blake a frog. A thrill of excitement coursed through the veins of the fishermen as they cast their lines over, all three striking the water at the same instant. Gray began to get fidgety after a few minutes of waiting without so much as a nibble on any one of the lines.

"Mooch feesh here," said Louie by way of encouragement. "Thees ees jus' right place. I t'ink we on rock way down—move leetle an' hook fall honder feet, maybe."

"This lake's got th' right name, all right," grunted Blake. "Deep Lake sounds t' me like th' bes' place fer bass."

"Pull heem up," commanded Louie after another five minutes of waiting. "Tak ze worm," he directed Gray, and handed Blake a grasshopper. He himself baited with a cricket which he extracted from the humid depths of the bait can.

Gray's bait had hardly sunk to the rocky ledge when he had a strike.

"Ah, eet ees worms!" exclaimed Louie with satisfaction.

Gray's pole bent nearly double as his captive made a dash for the lower rocks, pulling the line beneath the boat. Blake, fearing that Gray's inexperience might cause the loss of the prize, offered a few words of advice.

"Watch him, watch him!" exhorted the woodsman. "Give him slack—that's 'nough—

hold him up—thar he comes—goin' t' flip—give him line!" As Blake had prophesied, the fish came to the surface and somersaulted with a vicious jerk of the head and flip of the tail. "What'd I tell yuh?" called Blake. Gray was too busy and excited to answer, while Louie only sat and grinned as he watched the younger man endeavor to land the beauty.

Louie had wasted no time in changing his bait from cricket to worms. He let down, and without the slightest sign of emotion began to play with a bass which struck instantaneously. At the tremendous tug upon his own line and the rapid manoeuvering of Gray's catch, Louie saw the danger of crossed lines. He did his best to play his fish, keeping him some distance from Gray's line lest they become tangled. As the lines veered together Gray called "Hold up, Louie!" At the words, Blake awoke to the fact that both his companions had strikes while he sat on the other side of the boat, holding a line with a drowned grasshopper at the end of it. In chagrin he hauled up, reaching for the can of worms and relegating the grasshopper to the pile of useless bait.

"Land him er not," said Blake to Gray, "I ain't goin' t' be th' las' one o' this here crew t' git a fish."

Before either Gray or Louie had succeeded in landing their fish, Blake's rod dipped violently.

"How's that fer a strike!" he exulted. "Big-

gest one o' th' whole three! Good thing he's over t' this side th' boat."

Louie smiled in the midst of his own battle. He knew that Blake's bass was as apt to make a leap out of the water on the other side of the boat; and it did just that.

"Git back here, yuh son-of-a-gun," stammered Blake. He began to haul in rapidly, using both hands. Pulling as evenly as possible, getting down on his knees and reaching well over the gunwale, he managed to get Louie's flat willow basket under him, and in triumph lifted the bass into the boat. Louie pulled his in immediately afterward, and Gray, following Blake's expedient with the basket, soon had his fish safely landed.

"Jack got seex poun' feesh," said Louie after examining the three bass. "Gray got five an' ha'f, mine same. 'Nough for deener." He chuckled. "T'ree worm, t'ree feesh, t'ree people hongry—w'at more you want?"

After dinner the men again shouldered their packs and started out on the trail.

"We go on ze bear cave," announced Louie. "Eet ees w'ere I trap mon las' bear. I tell you about heem w'en we come to Keety Cobble w'ere my cave ees."

They swung along the south fork of Wolf Creek, passing the southern end of the Twin Lakes. Reaching the southeast side of Kitty Cobble about the middle of the afternoon, they

easily arrived at the cave by five o'clock. Blake built a fire at the entrance and supper was over before sunset. Sitting before the fire when it had grown dark, Gray reminded Louie of his promise to tell about the last bear he had trapped.

"Eet was in winter tam," began Louie, "two, t'ree year 'go, w'en I see track of bear long ze creek. Eet was mot'er bear, M'sieu, an' two leetle cub. I chase heem for long tam, an' in leetle w'ile I see hees track ees come straight for thees cave. Ze bear she know w'at good place eet ees for hide. W'en I come here I know she ees inside ze cave. I wait wan hour, mos' two hour, all for not'ing. T'en I know I mus' put trap—beeg bear trap. I go way back Wes' Canada Lake for get trap, an' come here nex' day. She ees still here, an' two leetle cub too, for I see no track go 'way from cave.

"Ah, M'sieu, I set ze trap here by mout' of cave. I fas'en chain on beeg pine tree là bas so bear can go out wit' trap, mais not drag heem inside cave. T'en I go back mon cabane. Nex' day eet ees snow, an' rain, an' freeze. I stay close by cabane for seex week for eet mak ze bad weat'er all tam.

"Wan day Jeem Sturgis come by cabane. I tell heem 'bout trap on Keety Cobble. He say eet be good t'ing go up an' see w'at 'appen. Ah, Mordieu, ma frien'—ze ol' mot'er bear was in ze trap by ze two fron' leg. She 'ave mak

ze groun' smoot' all way from cave to pine tree, an' ze rock by mout' of cave was pull way off by strengt' of hin' leg w'en she try get loose. W'en we fin' her she ees way down thees hill far as chain can go, an' she ees lay out 'side beeg flat rock là bas. She was dead, mort—she 'ave die from ze honger—an' by side of ze mot'er lie wan leetle cub, she ees mort too.

"Me an' Jeem, we look 'roun' for ozer leetle cub an' t'ink we fin' heem mort from ze honger. Jeem hear leetle soun' bimeby—we look in pine tree an' see pore leetle cub. He ees try hide. I clim' tree an' put rope 'roun' heem an' sweeng heem down. He ees mos' dead, mais we geeve heem somet'ing eat an' dreenk an' make heem warm in pack basket. Sapristi! Ma frien', he ees cry lak leetle chil' an' put ze paw over eye so he ees not see hees mot'er mort. I tak cub mon cabane up ze Kun-ja-muck an' keep heem. I 'ave trap bear no more."

When Louie's voice died away into silence neither Gray nor Blake felt like making any comment. The fire had grown dim and the temperature on top of Kitty Cobble, at its altitude of over thirty-two hundred feet, was becoming uncomfortably cool even though the men were sheltered by the rocks of the cave.

At a suggestion from Blake, Louie grunted, rose, and led the way into the cave, where he had previously made balsam beds for three. The floor and jagged walls of the cavern were

clean and dry. Louie's candles cast a weirdly flickering light over the gaunt recess. The old trapper indicated with a gesture the beds which Gray and Blake were to occupy.

"Eet ees là bas, behin' ze gran' rock, w'ere ze mot'er bear hide ze leetle cub," said Louie, pointing to the boulder beside which the beds lay. "You sleep here, an' I stay me near door so be ready eef somebody come mak veesit."

It was no new experience for Blake to sleep in a cave but to Gray this cavern was a chamber such as he had never slept in before. Great ghostly shadows filled the corners behind outcropping ledges of rock; behind them yawned a hole of impenetrable blackness. Presently, with the blowing out of the candles, Gray found himself staring into a Stygian void, where the outline of nothing was visible. The experience was a strange one to him, rolled in a blanket, high and deep in a mountain side. It seemed to him that he was in some remote corner of the universe, wild and unknown; yet it was not so, for he lay a bare hundred miles from great cities whose thoroughfares were at that very moment teeming with life and bright with lights.

He could not sleep. Instead, the absolute blackness of the cave became a screen upon which flashed, in rapid succession, scenes of long ago and incidents of his life since first coming to Orendaga. Presently there came be-

fore his mind's eye a vision of the Man of Mystery and the Queen of the Woods as he had glimpsed them at the King's Chair. He saw them as clearly as if they were actually but a few feet from him. In his eagerness to know who they were and what they could be doing out in the fastness of the Great North Woods, Gray nearly cried aloud. It was not long before his feverishly active mind quieted, however, and left him asleep, warm in the peaceful oblivion of his blanket.

Several hours passed before Gray was awakened by a call from Louie. He opened his eyes drowsily to see Blake doing the same thing, and Louie standing, fully dressed, in the light of a candle which he held.

"What yuh talkin' 'bout, Louie?" demanded Blake sleepily.

"Tam for get up," replied Louie, emphasizing his words with a wave of the lighted candle.

"It's blacker 'n midnight, Louie," remonstrated Blake. "How c'n we find th' way down th' mountain?"

"We are only in ze cave, M'sieu. Eet ees day ou'side."

"Come on, yuh better git up," called Blake to his companion, who gave every evidence of having dropped off to sleep again. Gray roused himself with difficulty and began to dress. He and Blake donned their clothes in silence and then packed the baskets for the return journey.

Louie explained that they would breakfast on the island of Peaceful Haven, not more than a two hours' hike.

Louie's companions had both lifted their packs, when Blake said, "Git th' candles, Gray." The latter did as bidden, but before removing the candles from their ledge of rock he stood for a moment looking about the cave, his eyes resting longest on that part where he had slept.

"Why don't yuh put out th' candles?" demanded Blake, a trifle impatiently.

Gray immediately seized the candles and advanced toward the dim light marking the cave's entrance without saying a word. His mind had been dwelling on Louie's story of the evening before; he was thinking of the change that had taken place in the old trapper. When, questioned Gray, would the persons who had taught Louie the law of love, reveal themselves?

The trapper's voice echoed in the entrance to the cavern. They listened to his words, "Come fas', ma frien', eef you want see ze smile of ze mornin'."

The entrance of the cave looked directly to the east; the men came from its narrow limits into an infinite expanse of beauty. Louie had stepped aside so that the marvellous coloring of the sky, made brilliant by the rising sun, might be the first thing to greet them. He

stood quietly watching; he saw that Gray was deeply affected. Without taking his eyes from the sky, Gray took a few steps backward until he reached Louie's side. Placing his own arm within that of the old Frenchman, he spoke.

"Louie, I want to tell you here that this is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, and that this visit to Kitty Cobble has meant more to me than anything I have ever experienced." Words were inadequate in the presence of an emotion as strong as Gray's. "I have seen strong men and women in the hills," went on Gray, "who can endure physical hardships, but who have gone beyond that and grasped those things which never perish. I owe much to you, Louie. You have given me a broader outlook on life; you have taught me to have sympathy for those weaker than myself and to protect rather than destroy."

"Ah, M'sieu"—and Louie's voice was soft —"eet ees heem, an' her, not me. She teach me t'ose t'ings."

"But who is 'she'?" asked Blake impulsively. The spell which had held Louie and Gray while they talked was broken. The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

"I tell you some tam, not now," was his answer. Then, with a care-free smile and a boyish gesture he led the way to a spot a short distance beyond the cave, protected from the wind by an overhanging rock. The fire which

he had built soon after getting up had burned low, but coffee was hot and waiting. Their regular breakfast would not be eaten until they reached the island of Peaceful Haven.

The two miles and a half from Kitty Cobble to Louie's cabin on the island were quickly covered; to them it was like going home. Louie's gait was swifter than usual and a new light seemed to shine from his weather-stained and wrinkled face.

It took only a few minutes to row from the mainland to the island. Before entering the little cabin, Louie stood still, looking intently towards his other cabin—his home—on the mainland. He did not try to conceal his anxious scrutiny of the place. Blake observed that Gray was almost as much interested in the distant cabin as was the old trapper. There was no sign of life there; the front door was closed, as were also the windows. Louie made no explanation, and his companions dared not trespass on his silence.

While Louie built a fire and prepared breakfast, Gray tried to busy himself with the table and tidying up the camp. He could not fully account for that drawing influence which caused him to look every few minutes across the bay toward the cabin on the other shore. He tried to forget them and to keep busy with the work, but again and again he found himself looking up as though expecting a signal

or a sight of those whom Louie was protecting.

The old Frenchman chatted to Nigger and Friskey in a patois which they seemed to understand perfectly; but Nigger was extremely uneasy. The crow's chatter was continuous and his wings were in constant motion as he sat on Louie's head or shoulders. At last Louie, weary of the bird's coaxing, picked a purple fringed orchis from a nearby cluster and placed it in Nigger's bill. With several upward movements of his hands he pointed to the distant cabin and spoke a few sentences in a queer sounding patois. Nigger flapped his wings; up and away he flew, straight as an arrow, and was soon out of sight. Louie smiled at Gray, then at Blake, and invited the men to breakfast.

They sat in the same places at the table which they had used before. Gray faced the King's Chair—and he had scarcely taken his seat when he saw two persons appear at the great throne of rock. Gray ate mechanically, his eyes on the King's Chair and his mind wondering what manner of people were those at whom he gazed. In a few minutes Nigger returned; a small piece of white paper was fastened to the crow's leg. Louie unfolded it, but without reading it handed the message to Blake.

"You read heem," requested the Frenchman.

Blake took it with trembling hand, and read aloud: "Welcome back to Peaceful Haven!"

# CHAPTER XV.

## AN UNWILLING SURRENDER

If thou wilt be a hero and wilt strive
To help thy fellows and exalt thyself,
Thy feet, at last, shall stand on jasper floors;
Thy heart, at last, will seem a thousand hearts—
Each single heart with myriad raptures filled—
While thou shalt sit with princes and with kings,
Rich in the jewel of a ransomed soul.

LOUIE did not ask Gray and Blake how long they would like to remain on the island of Peaceful Haven; their interest in his mysterious friends was penetrating deeper than he could as yet permit. Hence the old trapper proposed that they move on that very day.

"We go on ze trail to-day, M'sieu, ze trail by W'itney Lake. No stay thees place no more tam yet. I want you see ze beaver w'en he ees slap ze tail on water. An' we go 'roun' ze lake an' mout' of creek—eet ees mooch plaiśir, ma frien'. We start in wan hour an' come W'itney Lake for eat supper to-night."

With the crow on one shoulder and Friskey in the crook of his arm, the old Frenchman looked keenly at his companions. He was, to

all appearances, as unconcerned as though he had but suggested a morning's fishing on the lake before them. With one hand he stroked his squirred; and with an occasional queer movement of his head he rubbed his cheek against the crow's black and shiny wing. Friskey presently climbed to the other shoulder and frisked his tail in Louie's ear as if to draw his master away from the enticement of Nigger.

Gray looked at Blake intently, a mute question in his eyes. It was plain that they had been expecting a proposal from Louie of an entirely different sort; they had, quite naturally, expected to stay on Peaceful Haven much longer.

Louie, the wise old woodsman, read their thoughts in an instant. He had not questioned their unfeigned interest in the West Canada Lake region, nor their curiosity regarding himself and the secret which he had guarded so carefully for more than three years. He knew it was but natural for them to attempt to solve the mystery; and had not others asked questions, far more pointed than theirs? Gray and Blake knew more about the mystery than had anyone else in the past, but they quizzed him less.

"Well, Louie," said Gray finally, with an attempted smile of perfect sincerity, "we hate to leave Peaceful Haven—it is so beautiful—"

"Ah, M'sieu, mais jus' wait unteel you 'ave come to W'itney Lake! We go 'roun' ze eas' en' of lake—I want for you see mon cabane an' ze garden."

Louie's eyes held a bright twinkle as he finished, yet his words were not tinged with entreaty; they were, rather, an emphatic request, pleasingly put. He immediately started to pack the baskets, adding fresh supplies as he thought they would be needed and paying little attention to Gray and Blake.

They saw at once that they could do naught but give in. The mention of Louie's cabin and gardens on the mainland—the very cabin which they could see from where they were then standing—kindled a new enthusiasm within them. Perchance they would be granted a nearer glimpse of the cabin's two inhabitants; perhaps they might even see Louie's "queen." Gray began to assist Louie in getting ready the packs; and Blake put the cabin to rights.

The path by which they left Peaceful Haven wound between the trees and rocks, at times skirting the edge of the water, and again leading through a patch of mountain ash. In a moment they came out in the open space where stood Sunset Rock and the graves of the master of the island and his faithful servant. Louie never failed to do honor to the memory of these men when he was on Peaceful Haven; so the

three voyageurs halted, gazing in silence upon the two graves.

The wind was cool and fragrant; a bird sang with the blitheness of spring. It was no time for words, for platitudes. Gray read aloud, unconscious of those beside him, the single line stamped in bronze upon Sunset Rock: "They found that Peaceful Haven was the gate to Heaven."

They silently faced about and took their seats in the old skiff which was ready for them at the shore. Louie pushed off, grasped the oars, and after a few minutes of steady pulling the boat grated on the mainland beach. The trail commenced at the spot where they landed; and they had not advanced far around the shore line, passing Big Bay, when Louie's cabin on the east shore, near the King's Chair, came into sight. Louie halted at a fork in the path, one trail leading to East Canada Lake and the other in to his cabin and the garden.

When Gray and Blake saw that it was not Louie's intention to take them in to his camp they exhibited some chagrin; but they were careful not to let the Frenchman see their disappointment. So near, and yet so infinitely far from knowing what they wanted to know more than aught else! The thought of disregarding Louie's wishes and making their way to the camp never entered their minds. Doubtless that cabin which they could see so plainly

sheltered the two persons who had tantalized them by their appearances at the King's Chair. No one was in sight at the cabin, although one window was open. Gray's eyes roved over the gardens—he saw a plot neatly fenced with poles, making a high thicket palisade through which was a gate and a winding path that led directly to the cabin's door.

Suddenly Louie gave a long low whistle followed by several peculiar notes. The trapper's companions stood breathless, waiting for the answer; in a moment it came, clear and flute-like, proving that those whom Louie was protecting were near. Nigger held his head on one side, his wings half extended; Friskey sat poised on his master's shoulder, ready to leap. Again Louie sent forth his strange call, and again it was answered as before. With a muttered exclamation of satisfaction, Louie spoke to his pets, using the same weird patois, half French and half something else, intelligible only to his faithful animal followers.

With an excited fluttering of wings, Nigger sped toward the cabin, Friskey making for the nearest tree from which he started on a limb to limb dash that soon lost him to sight. Louie smiled happily. Not a person could be seen at the cabin or in the garden, nor could a sound be heard beyond the usual songs of birds, the hum of Louie's bees in the garden, and the gentle rustling of leaves.

"Nigger an' Freeskey stay on cabane unteel I am come back," said Louie, addressing the younger men for the first time since they had halted at the fork in the trail. "Come, ma frien', we mus' go fin' boat soon."

They shouldered their packs and marched along the trail. Gray felt defeated, in a sense; yet he knew he should not be disheartened over what had occurred. They had made considerable progress toward a solution of the mystery —in fact, had accomplished more than they dared expect when they began the quest. To win the friendship of Louie was a victory in itself, and to locate the mysterious strangers of the Kun-ja-muck Cave, as they had done, was a discovery essential to the fulfilment of their purpose. And yet, to be so near the secret and to leave it unfathomed was a bitter disappointment.

"Every step takes us farther from what we want to know," whispered Gray to Blake as they followed Louie's stocky figure along the trail.

"Don't fergit th' longest way 'round's th' shortest way home," returned Blake, hopefully. "Yuh know we're headed fer th' Kun-ja-muck."

As usual when on the trail, Louie spoke rarely. Since Gray and Blake had learned his every gesture, the spoken word was not necessary; for his unconscious movements indicated

to them what he wanted or intended to do. Gray wondered if Louie were laughing to himself over the little experience near the cabin.

Just before they emerged from the wood, skirting the shore of West Canada Lake where the trail to East Canada and thence to Whitney forsakes the shore, Louie suddenly stopped, held up his hand, and listened. Taking a few cautious steps forward he looked first up the narrow stream flowing from West into East Canada Lake, a stream where the grass grows high and thick; then he scanned the lake shore.

"Sapré! Eet ees five beauty!" he exclaimed softly, pointing toward the mouth of the stream. "I know thees deer, you see. Eet ees bes' for you stay on ze trail an' watch. W'en I w'is'le, you come."

Before showing himself to the deer, Louie whistled the same peculiar call he had used at the cabin. The deer jerked up their heads, all five at once, eager to see who was approaching. Louie took several slow steps, advancing into the open. Gray and Blake were astounded to see the animals coming toward him instead of bounding away in fright at the sight of a human being.

Pulled up in the reeds at the margin of the stream was the boat which Louie intended to use in going over to Whitney Lake. As he approached it, still moving with his slow, even tread, the deer drew nearer; by the time he

was close enough to place his hand on the gunwale of the small craft they were at his side, vying with one another for the place nearest to him. He pushed the boat clear of the tall grass and placed the oars in their locks, the deer remaining close to him, and apparently not in the least disturbed by his movements. When everything was ready for the men's departure, Louie opened a small paper sack, the sight of which caused a great capering among the animals.

"They act like a lot of children coming to meet their father," said Gray, a little awed.

"That's sugar he's givin' 'em," vouchsafed Blake. "Louie must've ben watchin' fer 'em all th' time."

"I'll bet they're the 'queen's' pets," said Gray in a tone of sudden conviction. "Didn't you notice he called them with the same whistle he used at the cabin?"

"Yep, that must be it," agreed Blake. "Look, they're all tryin' t' git int' th' boat with him!"

He and Gray were fascinated by the antics of the deer, and felt a growing concern for Louie's safety as they watched the struggle wax hotter.

"Look at that there buck drive that young 'un back with his horns!" exclaimed Blake. "He sure means business!"

"If Louie isn't careful they'll push him into the river," said Gray.

"Louie's callin' us," broke in Blake. "He says t' come on. Wonder what them deer'll do?"

At sight of the strangers up went their heads and tails in a flash. They remained motionless as Gray and Blake approached, but suddenly the old buck whirled and dashed across the creek. The younger ones kicked up their hind legs as in play and the whole band quickly disappeared through the wood.

Louie greeted his friends with a laugh. "I 'ave t'ink thees deer ees somew'ere 'roun'," he chuckled. "Mon gouverneur an' ze queen of ze wood 'ave get heem las' year. Ma queen, she keep heem in garden, an' put leetle bell on each wan—leetle bell reeng an' keep heem from honter. Ol' Abe Smeet', you know heem, Jack—he ees shoot ze bell off neck from wan doe! He say he keel heem all, ever' wan, thees year. Sapré! I say he ees not keel thees deer! He mus' come up Kun-ja-muck eef he want fin' heem—ze queen keep deer wit' her up on zat reever."

"How c'n yuh git 'em over thar?" queried Blake in surprise.

"Ma queen go, an' deer follow," replied Louie simply. "Deer love her, an' eet ees easy."

Under the persuasion of Louie's powerful strokes their little boat soon passed into East Canada Lake, called Mud Lake by the natives,

and thence into Whitney Creek. Pulling up over the first beaver dam, Louie pointed out the strength of its construction, and, in his abrupt way, explained the marvellously wise methods in engineering and building displayed by the industrious animals.

"To-night," he said, "you see heem work toot' an' tail!"

Blake laughed in agreement. "I've studied 'em fer four winters," said the lumberman, "when we was up t' th' Jessup River, 'long Indian Lake. Heaps of 'em over thar. I most d'cided they was 's clever 's human bein's, an' nobody could git me t' trap er shoot one now."

"Jack ees right," and Louie turned to Gray, to whom beavers and their ways were a distinct novelty. "I 'ave nevaire see wan beaver w'at ees not know more t'an Abe Smeet'! Jack, was you on reever Jessup w'en lumberjack run ol' Abe out of wood an' mos' hang heem by hees neck?" There was a smouldering light in Louie's eyes as he mentioned Abe Smith.

"Yep, I was with th' gang that winter," replied Blake, "an' I come near helpin' th' boys beat him up so's he'd never kill another beaver. I saw him hit th' poor helpless thing over th' head with a club."

"I trap too that winter," continued Louie. "T'ree year 'go I tell Abe no touch beaver, mais he jus' look like he want keel me maybe. I t'ink eet ees Isaiah Pikes who catch heem hit

beaver wit' beeg club. Isaiah tell me beaver 'ave two fron' paws, same as han's, caught in trap. Beaver see ol' Abe w'en he come, an' w'is'le for help. T'en beaver begin cry, jus' lak leetle baby, M'sieu. W'en Abe lif' club, beaver stan' on hin' feet an' lif' up paws an' put trap on head so Abe ees not able heet heem. Ah, beaver nevaire fight, nevaire get mad—he ees jus' try protec' heemsel'."

"Yep, I r'member that," said Blake. "We reached th' place jest too late. Th' beaver's head was smashed in. Two of us took it out'n th' trap an' th' others went after Abe. Fr'm what I heard, I guess them fellers knocked Abe most 's hard 's he pounded th' beaver. Then they told him t' git out an' never come back t' these here woods agin."

That night in the dusk they watched the beavers at work in their colony. The trio had been increased to four by the coming of Jim Sturgis, an old woodsman who was camping on the south shore of the lake. He had seen their fire as they prepared supper and paddled over just as twilight fell. Jim was a heavy-set figure of a man, with a piercing eye and a pleasant face. He was glad to see Louie and Blake, both of whom were old and fast friends of his. He greeted Gray with a woodsman's cordiality and put the younger man immediately at his ease. At Louie's invitation Jim agreed to cast his lot with the other three men for a few days.

"You an' Mr. Gray take my canoe," said Jim as the party started for the beaver dam. "Louie an' I'll walk 'long th' shore. 'Tain't more'n a five minute walk."

Gray and Blake paddled as silently as possible, neither one talking unnecessarily. The canoe had just entered the narrow channel of the stream leading up to the dam when Gray saw his first beaver. Before he could call Blake's attention, the animal raised its broad flat tail and smote the water a terrific blow—and from that moment on there was an incessant thrashing of the water by the tails of many beavers.

Louie and Jim were keeping pace with the canoe on the shore. When they reached the dam Gray and Blake lifted the craft to its top, and were quickly joined by the other two men.

"How many beaver do you think there are here?" queried Gray with deep interest apparent in his manner.

Jim Sturgis took upon himself the office of informant. He had familiarized himself with the lives and habits of the beaver as well or better than any other man in the region, save Louie, and could express himself in much clearer fashion than the Frenchman.

"Don't have t' guess it," was his reply. "I know fer sure there's jest fourteen in this here colony. I've named th' five oldest of 'em an' I've watched over all of em' fer several years.

Them two beaver houses over thar is the only ones in this colony. Each of 'em measures 'bout twenty-five feet 'round, an' stands 'most four foot 'n a half 'bove high watermark."

"They sure do a heap o' work, an' do it right an' without no disagreement," interrupted Blake. "Jest look at this here dam. It's made Whitney Lake a prettier place'n it would've been 'thout th' beavers. Dams hold water durin' th' dry season, yuh know, an' keep th' trees an' plants 'live."

Gray listened carefully to every word that fell from the lips of both Jim Sturgis and Blake. He had never realized that there was such harmony of purpose and amazing co-operation among the beavers and that they could build a dam with almost human foresight and intelligence.

"I wonder why we call them the 'lower animals'?" said Gray, slowly.

"Ah, M'sieu," rejoined Louie, "eet ees man lak me used for be, an' lak ol' Abe Smeet' w'at needs ze name more t'an ze beaver."

# CHAPTER XVI.

## GOD DOES ANSWER PRAYER

I stood on the shore beside the sea;
The wind from the west blew fresh and free;
While past the rocks at the harbor's mouth
The ships went north and the ships went south,
And some sailed out on an unknown quest,
And some sailed into the harbor's rest;
Yet ever the wind blew out of the west.

O, set your sail to the heavenly gale,
And then, no matter what winds prevail,
No reef shall wreck you, no calm delay;
No mist shall hinder, no storm shall stay;
Though far you wander and long you roam
Through salt sea spray and o'er white foam,
No wind that can blow but shall speed thee home.

—*Annie Johnson Flint.*

JIM STURGIS returned with the three voyageurs, as Louie was pleased to call himself and his two companions, to their camp on the lake shore. They had decided to sit around the fire for a little while before wrapping up in their blankets, that Louie and Jim might have an opportunity to talk over their many experiences together.

Gray and Blake gathered the wood while Louie and Jim made preparations for an early breakfast, both men working silently on their individual tasks. Gray had lighted the fire,

and now stepped back into the shadows, calling Blake to his side, where they could watch Louie and Jim moving about in the fitful light of the fire.

"It's another picture," said Gray. "I wish I could sketch it and paint these colors, especially the fire glow with its reflections."

"It's all right fer a pitcher," answered Blake, "but that thar open camp that th' state built ain't nothin' like Jim's big cabin that used t' stand down on th' shore. D'yuh notice Louie an' Jim didn't use th' fireplace made by th' officials o' this here Adirondack Park? Things ain't practical, that's what's th' matter —they don't fit th' real need o' th' woods!"

Blake's voice grew emphatic as he finished. It was clear that the subject of the camp sites in the Adirondack Park was a sore one with him. Whenever he came upon one of the open log camps which had been built by the state he plainly exhibited his disgust; and to-night, apparently, the scorn of Louie and Jim for the ready-made fireplace had kindled Blake's ire anew.

"They look as though they'd been planned by a group of artists or moving picture directors," suggested Gray. "Those cabins are nothing more than doll houses in comparison with Louie's comfortable camps."

Louie had explained to Gray upon arriving at Whitney Lake that they would make their

headquarters at this state erected camp in lieu of one of his own cabins or another camp site as convenient to the trail.

"Waal," drawled Blake, and spat meditatively, " 'twa'n't long ago that thar was heaps o' fine camps like Louie's, spread all 'round through th' woods."

"Why, what happened to them?" asked Gray in surprise, for Blake's tone implied that such camps no longer existed. "Did they burn down?"

"Every last one of 'em was torn down by th' state!"

"Why didn't the state buy the camps that were already built, when they were found to be on state land?" queried Gray. "Those old woodsmen's camps would have provided comfortable quarters for visitors and those journeying through this part of the country."

"That's jest what we all wanted," said Blake. "Th' guides 'round here begged fer their ol' home places. Most of 'em was fitted out under hard conditions an' sometimes with a big sacrifice. But 'twa'n't no use—now they're gone, an' these good fer nothin' open log camps have been built t' take their places."

Gray said nothing for a moment. "I wonder how Louie and Jim feel about having their camps torn down?" ruminated Gray.

"We'll mos' likely find that Louie an' Jim won't sleep in that there shelter t'night," said

Blake. "I ain't ever seen one o' them old timers use 'em. They seem t' think they're built fer women an' children, not men." Blake laughed at the peculiarities of the "old timers." He himself, though he disliked the open log camps intensely, was not averse to sleeping in one of the cabins when no better shelter offered. "Give me a guide's old log camp any day," he continued presently, "one with th' fireplace inside, built o' stone, an' a log ceilin', an' decent beds or balsam bunks. Them camps wa'n't perfect, but they was satisfyin'. Every one o' them places could have been saved. Waal, Louie an' Jim 're sittin' by th' fire—let's talk with 'em a while."

"It's goin' t' be a pretty cold night," greeted Jim as Gray and Blake approached. "Guess it's up t' Louie an' me t' keep th' fire goin' all night."

"Why, that bunk in there is big enough for four of us," said Gray, pointing to the open camp. "If we roll up in our blankets we can manage to keep warm."

"Huh, that's nothin' but a reg'lar ice box," snorted Jim, "open t' th' north, an' yuh can't git th' fire near 'nough 'count o' that cement fireplace. You two boys go t' sleep in thar an' Louie an' me'll keep th' fire goin'. We ain't had a visit fer quite a spell. We used t' hit it up 'bout once a year t'gether, didn't we, Louie?"

The old Frenchman remained silent, idly poking the fire without looking up.

"He must've forgot all 'bout it," continued Jim with a sly wink at Blake.

At this Louie slowly straightened up, turning to look Jim square in the eyes.

"No, Jeem, I 'ave not forget." The old trapper spoke deliberately, choosing his words with great care. "I weesh me eet nevaire happen, mais eet ees ze trut'. For ze mos' of my life I am ver' bad—Sapré! Ma frien', I weesh I was able for forget ze tam w'en I am drunk an' act lak beeg fool in ze village. Mais eet ees not so no tam no more.

"Maudit, M'sieu!" went on Louie, his voice vibrant with a growing emotion, "I 'ave not been ze good son for my mot'er—I 'ave ron away from her w'en I am small boy, garçon, an' 'ave ze age of fourteen year. Eet was because I 'ave too mooch work for do, M'sieu. My mot'er an' my fat'er, ze whole famille work hard, too. I 'elp my fat'er on ze farm, up in Quebec. Ah, eet ees ver' hard, ze work, for my fat'er hee ees strong lak moose, an' he t'eenk ever'body ees strong ze same. Mais, eet ees not mak ze diff'rence, M'sieu, ze work ees not hurt me, I t'eenk."

Louie paused and gazed regretfully into the fire, as if forgiving his father for the sternness bitterly resented in his youth.

"Mon père, he 'ave ze beeg famille, mais all

ze chil'ren ees small. So ze work ees necessaire for me. I cut ze hay an' 'ave care for ze cow an ze peeg—ah, I do anyt'ing w'at mon père say, an' I t'ink he say too mooch. So wan day I tol' my mot'er w'en she ees 'elp me in ze fiel', wit' ze hay. Ah, eet ees break mon 'eart—I cannot tol' eet to you—'' Louie's eyes were sad and tenderly deep.

"My mot'er she ees love me,'' went on the old trapper, "an' she try for mak me 'appy, mais eet ees work, work, work, all ze tam ze travail—'' In the flickering fire light Louie seemed to see that French lad of long ago, on the farm in Quebec, a lad whose muscles ached while his youthful heart yearned for the play that was ever denied to him. To that child the father appeared an ogre, brutal as those in the fairy tales his mother told him by the hearth during the long winter evenings; and his mother became the princess of the story, imprisoned and powerless, bending her back to toil at the bidding of the ogre.

"I 'ave ask her wan day w'en we are in fiel'. I say: 'Ma mère, I can stay no more, I am seeck from ze work. Do you care eef I ron away?' ''

The old Frenchman paused again and sighed. The story was causing an anguish of spirit which he had not felt for many years, so much more bitter was the memory when told aloud instead of being repressed within the silent chambers of the heart.

"Ma mère," he resumed, "she ees look at me lak ze deer wat ees scared, an' bimeby her face eet ees ver' sad an' I feel ze gran' shame. She say to me: 'Louie, I know how eet ees zat you feel, mais wat am I goin' do wen my Louie ees gone away?' An' she ees cry, M'sieu, an' I was goin' tell her zat I am stay wit' her. Mais she pray—Ave Maria—I know ze prayer, mais I cannot tol' you—an' I kees her—" He stopped, his voice choking. For some time he was silent; and his listeners thought much. Then abruptly he began again, speaking more quickly and in a harsher tone, as if in a hurry to pass over something unpleasant.

"I am go wit' circus for long tam, many year. I work all ze night an' sleep in daytam. I was tent man, an' eet mak no matter eef tent man leeve or die. Mordieu! I dreenk lak wan fool. An' wan winter I teenk I go home for s'prise ze famille in Quebec. I 'ave mooch money, an' I teenk I geeve some to ma mère.

"Eet ees night tam wen I come ze house. I teenk ze house was nice house, mais wen I see eet—ah, she 'ave no paint an' ees all come to pieces. I go 'roun' ze house an' look in ze weendow. Eh bien, ma frien', ma mère ees in ze chair, mais how she ees change! Ze hair ees w'ite an' ze face ees t'in. I was not able for see my fat'er, an' I cannot tell who else ees t'ere for t'ey 'ave grow so beeg."

He stopped and sat still, as if he had finished

his story. Presently, however, he looked around to see if his auditors were interested. Then he continued.

"I knock on ze door. My seester, she open, an' teen I am canal man an' want ze bed for night. I geeve her two sheelleng an' go inside. Ze eyes of ma mère, t'ey 'ave been old an' she ees not know me at all. T'ey geeve me some-t'ing to eat, an' ma mère she ees begin to tell me all 'bout her boy Louie, who 'ave been gone away for feefteen year. She say she ees waitin' for heem to come home before she ees die. I say: 'W'ere your Louie ees gone? Maybe I see heem an' tell heem come home.'

" 'Ah, M'sieu,' she say, 'I weesh eet ees so! Ma Louie, he no write, an' wen hees fat'er die we cannot tell heem.' An' t'en my seester she say: 'My mot'er pray for Louie come home before she die.' My mot'er, t'en she mak sign of ze cross an' pray Ave Maria, wat she pray in ze fiel' ze day wen I firs' leave home—

"Ah, I go on my knees by ma mère an' say: 'I am Louie!' Ma mère, she tak off ol' glasses an' look at me an' clap her han's an' kees me many tam. T'en she say: 'God, le bon Dieu, 'ave hear my prayer an' he 'ave answer eet!'

"I geeve her money, an' in leetle tam I go 'way. Ma mère she no want me go 'way—she ees pray Ave Maria for me not dreenk ze wheeskey an' leeve lak beast—mais I want heem too mooch, I cannot leeve wit'out dreenk

ze whiskey. So I go 'way an' I get drunk some more. Mordieu! Ma frien', no wan ees dreenk so mooch as me! I go on ze circus for leetle w'ile, an' in few year I hate ze men in ceety. So I come in ze wood. I no lak nobody, only ze chil'ren some tam—eet ees because t'ey remin' me for ma mère, so gentle an' so sweet.

"I beeld wan ver' fine cabane on ze reever Kun-ja-muck w'ere I leeve. Ever'body call Louie ol' diable—devil. Eet ees true, ma frien', I am dreenk all ze tam. Wan day I see ze queen an' ze gouverneur—ze queen she remin' me for ma mère, an' she 'ave try 'ard for mak me wan good man. She 'ave wan difficile tam, mais she ees nevaire get tire.

"I tell her wat ma mère say wen she ees pray for me, an' ze queen she say ze prayer of ma mère weel be answer some tam. Ze queen she mak me b'lieve on God—le bon Dieu—in ze sky, an' wan day leetle w'ile ago ze queen say to me: 'Ah, Louie, God 'ave answer ze prayer for you mot'er.' I am not know wat ze queen mean wen she say eet. I know wan t'ing—Louie know wat beeg fool an' bad man he ees, an' he weel not be lak eet no tam no more."

Louie rose and replenished the fire, while the three men who had listened to his story in rapt attention made no move toward getting up. Strangely enough, it was Jim Sturgis who broke the silence. The bronzed old woodsman, whose face was seamed and wrinkled, spoke in

a voice trembling with emotion, a voice which hesitated at every few words.

"So—I wondered why yuh didn't—hit it off with me no more—Yer mother prayed—prayed—an' God answered it."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### LOUIE SAYS FAREWELL

He who guides may choose the way,
And little we heed what path we take,
If nearer home each day.

LOUIE and Jim were up at dawn, but Gray and Blake were soundly sleeping when Jim woke them. In a moment they were at the lakeside, and after washing in the cold water they reported to Louie, asking if they could help in preparing the breakfast.

"Work ees all done—we eat now," chirped the Frenchman.

"You've spoiled us on this trip," said Gray. "We haven't worked half hard enough."

Louie said nothing, but continued to set out the food. When he had finished and everything was arranged to satisfy his taste, he motioned his three companions to eat.

"Eat, ma frien'," he said with a gesture, "for ze nex' meal you 'ave weel be at ze Bear-foot Inn."

The announcement fairly startled Gray and Blake. Jim looked at their astonished faces and said in his droll, good-natured way, "Louie hit yuh kind o' hard, didn't he?"

"Yuh bet he did," said Blake emphatically,

and glanced at Gray expectantly, as if wishing him to take up the conversation. The latter was somewhat taken aback, as his preconceived ideas of what this trip might reveal had been rudely shattered by Louie's simple statement.

"Well," he ventured, "Jack and I have had such a good time over here that I suppose we'd stay on forever if Louie didn't send us home." The words were no sooner out of his mouth than he mentally kicked himself for voicing the suggestion that he and Blake were nothing more than puppets to be moved about at Louie's will. And yet, Gray thought, he and Blake couldn't do anything else.

While they ate Louie explained that Jim would guide them through to the old military road leading into Orendaga.

"We'll go up 'round Pillsbury Lake," said Jim. "My canoe's down here ready t' use. 'F we leave in 'bout a hour yuh c'n be in Orendaga by five o'clock."

Gray and Blake acquiesced, knowing that any protest on their part would be useless, and furthermore, that out of courtesy to Louie, who had made their trip so enjoyable, they must follow his wishes for the present.

Louie packed a lunch for them to eat at noon, putting it in Blake's basket. The Frenchman volunteered to walk with them as far as the brook which flowed from Puddle Hole. It was his way of showing respect to those he trusted.

He did not cross the brook on the stepping stones, however, but halted at one side of the path.

Giving his right hand to Blake and his left to Gray, he said, "Eet 'ave mak mooch plaisir for me for you to come here. I see you on Kun-ja-muck in Octobre, an' Leeveengstone boys, too!"

"We'll be there all right," rejoined Gray fervently. "We want to explore that stream and the lakes and ponds. I wonder if you'll mind if we build a log house up there somewhere?"

"Eet weel geeve me ze gran' happiness!" exclaimed Louie. "You can mak heem on wes' side trail by Kun-ja-muck near ol' lumber camp. Eet ees in ze center of ze Kun-ja-muck countree."

"That would put us about four miles from your cabin and five from Orendaga, wouldn't it?" asked Gray.

"Jest 'bout," broke in Blake. "We c'n git our supplies by wagon er mebbe by canoe t' th' landin' 't th' head o' Elm Lake."

"We want you to visit us often," said Gray to Louie. "We never can fully repay you for all you've done for us on this trip, but some day we're going to show you how much we appreciate your kindness."

"I 'ave done ver' leetle," said Louie simply. He stood a moment looking down at the ground

in silence. "Au revoir!" he said abruptly, and vanished up the trail.

Jim Sturgis immediately started off, Gray and Blake following. There was not a word spoken until Jim lifted his canoe from its hiding place and carried it to the water's edge.

"I thought," said Jim, "that Mr. Gray would like t' see this end o' th' lake, as well as South Bay, which begins down thar by them two islands. Most people don't know that this here lake is higher 'n any other 'round here, 'ceptin' Deep Lake. It's 'bout twenty-five hundred feet 'bove sea level."

"Pretty high," commented Gray.

" 'Tain't 's nice as th' others," remarked Blake.

"Used t' have a camp up here," drawled Jim in his slow way. "That was some years ago. Deer was thicker in them days, an' they was plenty o' mushrat an' mink—used t' git fishers an' marten 'round th' Cedar Lakes."

As Jim and Blake paddled through the lake, turning at the islands so that Gray could see South Bay, Jim continued with his reminiscences.

"Right over thar," he declared, pointing to the northeast end of the lake, "was whar my camp used t' stand. That's whar I first met Louie Lamont."

Jim paused expectantly, as is the way with woodsmen when about to commence a tale of

more than passing interest to their listeners. After the awaited encouragement from Blake, Jim cleared his throat and continued.

"I was all alone one night in November, settin' in my cabin, when I heard a knock on the door. Opened it, an' thar was Louie. 'Fore I could do anythin' he busted right int' th' room —half drunk, he was, an' a more dev'lish lookin' critter I never see. He didn't tell me his name, an' wa'n't friendly er nothin'. I fixed him somethin' t' eat an' give him a bed. He took 'em 'thout bein' coaxed, an' didn't say thanks fer 'em neither.

"Waal, I couldn't sleep much; kep' up th' fire an' kep' a close eye on him, too. 'Long toward mornin' I fell into a sound sleep—an' when I woke up he was gone. I didn't run 'cross him agin fer months—saw traces of his huntin' an' trappin', but never him. Looked t' me like he wa'n't very anxious t' see any human bein', an' t' tell yuh th' truth, I wa'n't very anxious 'bout seein' him agin, I c'n tell yuh."

"I know what yuh mean," said Blake. "Yuh saw him sev'ral years 'fore I did, but I'll never fergit my first sight of him. I took him fer a crim'nal er somethin' worse. He sure is another man now, though."

"That ain't been proved," objected Jim. "O' course, th' change has been comin' on slow fer th' las' three years; but yuh c'n r'member,

Jack, how he got drunk two winters ago after sellin' all his skins an' gittin' all his supplies? Jest wait 'til next January er February when he goes int' Orendaga. Then we'll have a chance t' see if he really is changed fer good."

The canoe grated on the shore where the trail leading to the old military road began. They walked along this path for a mile before coming out on the highway where Jim was to leave them. He said farewell briefly; perhaps his recent talkativeness had reacted into more than his ordinary reticence, but at any rate he was extremely frugal with words as he took leave of his companions.

Gray and Blake were now eager to reach Orendaga. Their journey into the West Canada Lake region was at an end; and they felt gratified and chagrined by turns at the progress they had made toward solving the mystery of the Kun-ja-muck Cave. They soon crossed the Miami, taking the Lewey Lake road at the clearing where Camp Perkins used to stand. Blake stopped long enough to show Gray the spot where the buildings had stood. He described the plan of the camp and told of the delightful days that many visitors from the city had spent there; it was also a rendezvous for many of the Orendaga guides and lumbermen, and Blake had passed many a winter evening in the jolly company of his own kind.

There lay the foundation of the old stone

fireplace, now in ruins. The chimney of the kitchen where those delicious meals had been prepared was yet standing, stark and drear against the sky line.

"It stood on state land," said Blake, barely concealing his feelings about the sort of thing that he and Gray then looked at. "So it was condemned an' torn down—an' this is all that's left t' tell th' story."

In contrast to the demolished hunting camp stood the open camp, its uselessness proved in startling fashion by the cement fireplace which bore no marks of fire, though it had been there for several years. At the very place where guides, woodsmen, hunters from the city, and those who had come for fishing trips used to gather, there was now only a welter of weeds and undergrowth.

With a grunt of disgust Blake struck off down the road, not looking back until he had reached the Jessup River bridge. He waited for Gray to come abreast with him at the bridge, and then halted the march to drink in the beauties of the river bank. The water above the bridge looked deep and was without a ripple. Every fern, flower and tree along its shore was mirrored perfectly in the smooth surface. For half an hour they lingered at the bridge, Gray pointing out to Blake many of the different kinds of flowers nearby and telling him their names.

Then they struck out with a stiff stride for Orendaga, making up for lost time. On their homeward journey they talked so earnestly that they failed to notice the hills and dales which they passed. The great expanse of Lake Pleasant valley suddenly opened before them as they topped Page's Hill, and every building in the village of Orendaga could be plainly distinguished. There lay the lake with its sandy beaches and the Sacandaga River threading its way toward the Hudson. The little white church was most conspicuous because of its steeple; but there was one other building which the eyes of both men eagerly sought—the Bearfoot Inn, nestled in the hills overlooking the lake. They gazed upon the village without comment for several minutes.

"We've seen some beautiful places," said Blake, "but this here's th' spot whar a feller has a real welcome, an' he c'n well call it 'home'."

# CHAPTER XVIII.

## MIKE'S FOUL TRADE

When the golden evening gathered on the shore of Galilee,
When the fishing boats lay quiet by the sea,
Long ago the people wondered, tho' no sign was in the sky,
For the glory of the Lord was passing by.

Not in robes of purple splendor, not in silken softness shod.
But in raiment worn with travel came their God;
And the people knew His presence by the heart that ceased to sigh,
When the glory of the Lord was passing by.

For He healed their sick at even, and He cured the leper's sore,
And sinful men and women sinned no more,
And the world grew mirthful hearted and forgot its misery,
When the glory of the Lord was passing by.

Not in robes of purple splendor, but in lives that do His will,
In patient acts of kindness comes He still;
And the people cry with wonder, tho' no sign is in the sky,
That the glory of the Lord is passing by.

ON the evening of their return to Orendaga Gray and Blake dined with Uncle David and Paul Ward at the Bearfoot Inn. They were in a small private room, free from interruption, where they discussed the trip, and the mystery over the coffee. To Gray and Blake, this was an admirable opportunity to take stock, to review what they had actually accomplished toward the end desired.

Their first great achievement had been the winning of Louie Lamont; second was the discovery that the mysterious being of the Kunja-muck Cave was not only one, but two at

least, and that Louie was an integral part of the mesh of secrecy that seemed to surround them; and finally, Gray and Blake were certain that the mystery had forsaken the Kun-ja-muck in favor of the West Canada Lake region during their recent trip, and that there was a woman in the mystery, a woman whom Louie called "ze queen." The two friends had every assurance that in due time the entire mystery would be revealed to them, for Louie had promised, "Some tam you know, not now."

The four men seated about the dinner table, their heads close together in a discussion of this intensely interesting problem, came to agree that the most peculiar phase of the mystery was the remarkable change that had apparently occurred in Louie. That these persons whom he had protected—the queen and the governor, as he called them—had exerted a powerful influence for good upon the old trapper, was very clear to all who knew Louie even slightly.

Gray, in the serenity of the forest and the quiet of the evening camp fires, had lost something of his enthusiasm for running the mystery to earth. The stillness, the largeness of nature, had calmed his own unrest. Most of the time, he now realized, he had journeyed as in a dream, led through a realm of beauty while his cleverness lay dormant. Now that he had returned to give an account of himself he felt

some chagrin, for the mystery was still unsolved. True, he and Blake were closer to the heart of it, but not close enough to make their knowledge satisfactory. The whole matter depended on Louie, Louie!

The old French trapper, now that distance had dissolved the spell he seemed to have cast over Gray and Blake, was, to the younger men, more unreal than ever. The way he had led them about was positively uncanny; yet they had willingly followed. Louie told them many things about nature, things which they had not known before; and in broken phrases and picturesque imagery he had revealed an almost mystical faith in the God of nature.

Yes, Gray was dissatisfied with the trip. Why had he and Blake not taken a high hand, used all the native sagacity of the woodsman and the finesse of the university graduate to discover the identity of persons whom they had actually seen again and again? While the other three men talked, Gray tried to come to some conclusion about it in his own mind; and he failed because, at every point, he ran against the same barrier—Louie! Knowing Louie, he realized that they had done everything possible under the circumstances. Louie had kept them interested in the things they saw along the trails, in the habits of wild animals, in his pets, in everything—except the mystery. It had seemed not to count, and yet it was their sole

reason for undertaking the journey to the West Canada Lakes.

Early in the evening visitors began to drop in at the Bearfoot Inn—Milt Boyd, Isaiah Pikes and his wife, Rob Stuart, and others who had learned of the return of Gray and Blake. The four who had dined together came out into the Woods Room of the Inn shortly after the laughter and sounds of jollity from the other room proclaimed the presence of those who were so interested in the results of the trip. Mattie was the first to greet Gray and Blake as they entered; she had not seen them that afternoon as they came into the village, and her eagerness to know what they had discovered was, for the moment, eclipsed by her happiness at seeing the two men again.

In the midst of the excited questions and exchange of greetings, in came Cal Wilks. The old guide was as enthusiastic as a boy and shook hands with Gray and Blake with an unwonted cordiality.

"We've sent for Mrs. Livingstone and the boys," announced Mattie with a happy smile.

"How did you manage it?" asked Gray, rather surprised that the occasion was taking on the character of a reception. He had not anticipated the presence of so many of the villagers.

"It was easy," replied Mattie. "Every family in the village has been asking for days when you and Jack were coming back."

Blake was at the other side of the room, in earnest conversation with Paul Ward, when Gray's attention was caught by a booming question from the lumberman.

"So you've had trouble with Mike Murphy?"

The conversation hushed abruptly, and Gray saw that those present had suddenly become serious. It was evident that there was something of more than ordinary importance in the trend of Blake's question. Ward hesitated before making an answer, and in the brief moment of his hesitation Gray realized that the minister's face was thinner, the lines deeper, and that he had been through some great struggle in the weeks while the two friends were absent. As Ward began to speak, however, his eyes held a light of resoluteness and firmness.

"Mike Murphy did his best to block you," said Ward. "He knew of your plan to go into the West Canada Lake region, and dispatched Sandy Edwards to find Louie and to tell him why you were going."

Then Gray knew that Murphy's actions on the night of the minstrel show were a rank deception; he knew why the bootlegger had permitted that single malevolent glare as he left the hall.

"Sandy reached Louie the night before you left Orendaga," continued the minister, "and we feared that, as a result, Louie would either ignore you or attempt to force your immediate

return. We have not learned what Sandy told Louie, but we know that for some reason Sandy located old Abe Smith and called upon him to stand by Mike in his treachery."

"But Louie stuck to you," broke in Uncle David, turning to Gray, "instead of obeying Mike Murphy."

"Now I c'n see why Louie was waitin' fer us an' s'prised us that night in camp," said Blake to Gray. "That's why he let us see int' th' myst'ry 's far 's he could—he wanted us t' know that he'd been changed."

"I learned to-day," continued Ward, "that Mike Murphy sent a quart of whiskey to Louie when Sandy went to tell him that you were coming. Sandy came into Rob's store while I was there this morning and let out the whole story. Sandy said Mike sealed the bottle so he and Abe Smith would be sure to deliver it. Mike knew that if he could get Louie started drinking again, it would put hundreds of dollars in his own pocket, and that's why he tried to play the friend to Louie by giving him the information and the whiskey.

"You should have heard Sandy tell about it. He and Abe reached Louie the day before you went to West Canada Lake; they thought Louie would be delighted with the liquor, and they wanted to be there to see you driven out of the woods. Louie just listened to Mike's message, took the bottle, and smiled. Abe and Sandy

were sure that the old trapper would give them a drink—but Louie walked over to his big outdoor fireplace and set the bottle on top of it. With his rifle in his hand he walked back a little way, took aim, and shot the bottle 'through the heart,' as he called it. Then he turned to Mike's henchmen and said, 'Go home, ma frien', an' tell Mike Murphy.' "

The minister stopped, and the little company in the Woods Room murmured to one another in wonder. They had not known, any more than Gray and Blake had known, that Murphy's treachery had attempted the frustration of the quest. Ward came nearer to Gray, and explained what Murphy had done.

"Mike had smuggled in a quantity of liquor, through some political pull, and before he knew it he had his old gang around him again. They became like demons let loose, and their families began to suffer terribly. You see, Mike learned that you and Jack had gone away, and said that it was a good time for the boys to have a little fun. All he thinks about is money—he knew that the men who craved the stuff would pay any price for it. We've had terrible times here, and the worst part of it is that the families suffer so.

"You know that Perry had saved almost enough to buy Dexter Strong's twenty acre farm. His wife had slaved and put away the pennies; she and the children even picked ber-

ries all summer to earn some extra money. They thought it was safe, but Perry got it when he found Mike had a supply of liquor."

The minister's voice was filled with a sincere compassion. The struggle had been a hard one for him; the limit of his strength had nearly been reached in his tireless efforts to provide for the families of those who spent their time and money in Mike's Temperance Parlor.

Mrs. Livingstone and the boys came in just as Ward finished. Tom and Bill were overjoyed to see their friends back again, and Mrs. Livingstone, though less effusive, was no less sincere in her welcome to Gray and Blake. The boys were told many incidents of the trip and of the plans for going up the Kun-ja-muck in October. Presently the gathering began to dwindle in numbers, for these old guides were unaccustomed to staying up late at night. After bidding all his friends good-night, Gray suggested to Ward that they go out on the porch where later they might see the glory of the mid-summer moon as it rose over the lake.

Blake and Mattie remained in the living room of the Inn, she, eager to hear from his lips the whole story of the trip in all its detail, and he, immeasurably happy to talk with her again after so long an absence. Uncle David, who had gone out to the porch with Gray and Ward, excused himself with the plea that he

must make the Inn ready for the night, thus leaving Gray and the minister alone.

It was very satisfying for them to be together after what had seemed a period of long absence, though in reality only three weeks, for they were genuinely interested in each other. They wandered out to a point along the shore, where the solitude of the summer evening was made more impressive by the absolute calm of the lake.

The two friends were quiet during the twilight interim between day and dark; they watched the stars appear "silently, one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven." It was August, but the night was cool and crisp. The moon, unseen as the sunset afterglow gradually faded, now appeared a mellow crescent in the western sky.

In low voices the two men talked of the things that interested them both—God, nature and man. Ward was not an ordinary man, for his interests were wide and his knowledge covered many fields. Well read in science and philosophy, something of a linguist, a thorough student of literature, this pastor yet had a deep sympathy for men and a tremendous understanding of the human heart and soul.

Ward commenced to tell Gray more of his work in this little Adirondack village, a village whose population numbered less than two hundred souls, and where the church members

were hardly an eighth of that number. He told of his fight against Mike Murphy and the gang of bootleggers that he represented. Gray had not realized what untold misery and suffering was daily brought into the homes of some of the villagers, how the innocent were forced to endure privation solely because a man who was the very incarnation of fleshy lust and who feared neither God, man, nor devil, had placed temptation in the way of those whose minds were too weak to resist.

"I almost think I could watch Mike Murphy go to Hades with satisfaction," declared Ward vehemently, "and some of his gang with him —if it were not for their families—but no man is hopeless in the sight of the Lord."

He stopped and sighed deeply. He was not easily discouraged, but at times he felt that his fight against Murphy was a losing one.

"Mike is one of the stopping stations on a rum trail from up-state to the greater cities," went on Ward in explanation of Mike's foul trade. "We are supposed to have Prohibition, but liquor runs through from Montreal to this section just as these mountain streams flow unimpeded into the Hudson. Old Abe Smith has been suspected, Sandy, Sam Woodward—scores of others, but it's no use. Mike has too much power. Other guides are under suspicion as well, and if it were not for Jack Blake, Mike would have an easier time. Mike doesn't want

Jack to have any influence in the woods—Jack's word has a great deal of weight with these lumbermen, and he hates Mike and his gang. You see that's why Mike tried to thwart your plans—he knows that if Jack Blake stumbles on his trail or on that of his rum runners, the traffic will be ruined for him."

"If Murphy hates us that much, I imagine we will have a good many added difficulties to cope with when we go up the Kun-ja-muck next month," said Gray, thoughtfully.

It was still very early in the evening, for lights in the village were gleaming, when they decided to make their way back. Venus, the evening star, had disappeared from the heavens while the two men talked, and the moon was now at the point of setting, seeming to rest on the crest of a dark bank of clouds just above Turtle Mountain. Deep red, its horn looked like the flaming prow of some olden ship, burning in mid-ocean. Gently, the ever dimming crescent slipped beneath the bank of clouds into the great sea of interstellar space beyond the mountains.

Softly, almost in a whisper, Ward spoke, looking out over the stillness of the lake and then raising his eyes to the heavens:

"For the bright firmament
Shoots forth no flame
So silent, but is eloquent
In speaking the Creator's name."

# CHAPTER XIX.

## THE SILVER BROOK CAMP

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune,
It moved us not.

GRAY and Blake spent the following morning in selecting tools and other materials for the new camp to be erected up the Kun-ja-muck. Later in the day they met Mattie in the living room of the Inn, and the three pored over a topographical map covering the Indian Lake quadrangle. They began by tracing the route each one of them had taken many times, beginning at the dock of the Bearfoot Inn on Lake Pleasant, continuing along the great sandy beach, and entering the Sacandaga River at the bridge.

"The meadows through here," said Gray, indicating the fields just beyond the bridge, "are one of the most interesting places I've visited anywhere around Orendaga. I call that section my bird paradise—it was when I first came up here, in late May and June, that I discovered a number of different songsters

and birds of really brilliant plumage. Between that bridge and the mouth of the Kun-ja-muck is a regular rendezvous for warblers."

"As we leave this here region o' th' Sacandaga," interrupted Blake, pointing to a spot marked as a marsh on the map, "we enter th' Kun-ja-muck. An' right here's th' cave," he finished, making a small dot farther up on the map with his pencil.

"That certainly is a crooked stream!" observed Gray with a whistle of amazement.

"Oh, but that's why it's so mysterious and picturesque," Mattie suggested. "It's the canoeist's paradise."

" 'Twas jest six year ago that we lumbered east o' Elm Lake an' over th' Big Range," said Blake, sweeping a blunt finger across the map at one side of the Kun-ja-muck.

"Show us the spot you've chosen for your camp, Jack," begged Mattie.

"Waal, thar ain't but one choice, t' my way o' thinkin'."

"That's exciting," commented Gray with an inquisitive smile.

"Where is it?" urged Mattie, a bright light in her eyes.

"Right over thar!" pronounced Blake, making another dot on the map.

"On Silver Brook!" exclaimed the girl joyously.

"Yep," said Blake with pride and satisfac-

tion in his tone, "Silver Brook on one side, th' Kun-ja-muck on t'other, an' th' outlet o' Lonely Creek right across from it. Th' spot faces south, an' has a good view in three directions—east, south an' west. Yuh c'n git thar by water, an' it's jest off'n th' main trail, 'bout six mile from here an' four from Louie's cabin."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Mattie. "Why, anyone can walk up there in a couple of hours, or even go up with old Dan in the buckboard when supplies are needed."

" 'Tain't located on either trail," Blake continued to explain. "It's 'bout a five-minute walk from either. That'll give Louie an' his 'queen' an' th' 'gov'nor' plenty o' freedom t' come an' go when they've a mind to. Then they won't feel that we're tryin' t' corner 'em or butt in on 'em."

"That's wise, Jack," said Gray. "Those companions of Louie's are too intelligent for us to get anywhere by spying on them. There's only one thing for us to do, and that is to wait until they see fit to surrender. I'm convinced of that now. Louie will not desert them, and he won't reveal their secrets beyond what they themselves permit. They intend to make themselves known some time—Louie told us that."

"Thar ain't no doubt 'bout that," said Blake, "an' that's why I picked out this here spot whar Silver Brook joins th' Kun-ja-muck.

They c'n live up t' Louie's cabin 'thout bein' disturbed, an' if Louie wants us with him up thar we c'n go, an' he c'n visit us in jest th' same way."

"We can be off by eight in the morning," suggested Gray as Blake rolled up the map they had been studying. "Tom and Bill Livingstone promised to be on hand at seven, and Cal and Isaiah have offered to help us clear up the spot and lay the logs. Rob Stevens is going to carry the supplies up on the buckboard, and he's agreed to stay as long as we need him with his horses."

The next evening found seven men and two horses snugly protected by a rough shack on the camp site. The men were eager to begin work the next day on the Silver Brook cabin; each guide had carefully inspected the location with the authoritative air of a connoisseur in such matters, and had pronounced the spot satisfactory in every way. In the deepening dusk they sat around the big fire which lighted up the woods and warmed their hastily built balsam beds. They told stories by turn until the pastime grew wearisome.

Blake had brought his violin. He stood in the circle of the fire light and played songs that they all knew, the old-time melodies from dance tunes to hymns. For some of them it was a novel experience and they sat there spellbound, impressed by the majesty of the night

and the charm of the music. The moon had gone down very early, unnoticed; and in the great dark expanse under the stars they lay down to sleep, leaving one man on guard to keep the fire burning.

On either side of the Kun-ja-muck lay Silver Brook and Lonely Creek, rippling and tinkling as they bounded over the rocks or tumbled over miniature falls on their way to join the Kun-ja-muck, then the Sacandaga and Hudson, and finally the sea.

Dawn was ushered in by one of those glorious Adirondack sunrises which, with the sombre banks of foliage and the mountains round about, thrilled Gray with its grandeur. Though scenes of such a nature were new to none of the others, they were filled with more than ordinary enthusiasm; the Livingstone boys in particular shouted and capered about in high glee.

Every man was assigned to his work as cook or helper; and it was not long before they were eating breakfast. Gray, between mouthfuls, tried to sketch to the other men Blake's idea for laying out the camp. Breakfast over, the point hummed with activity. Cal and Isaiah hauled and piled rocks into the shape of a back log fireplace, while the others cut logs and dragged them to the site of the cabin—a little knoll which gave a wide prospect on the south and east.

At the end of the day two cabins of spruce

logs were completed, even to the rough, but waterproof, thatching of bark that made them so quaint and picturesque. Blake and Rob Stevens returned to Orendaga during the afternoon and brought back stoves and other needed winter supplies. The Livingstone boys had busied themselves with felling birches for furniture, and brought in an empty hornets' nest for decoration. The next day Cal, Isaiah and Rob returned to the village, promising to visit the camp at Silver Brook whenever opportunity offered.

The early autumn days passed all too quickly in the many occupations connected with settling in and furnishing a camp. Making furniture, building balsam bunks, fashioning a comfortable lounge, candlesticks and numerous other things kept the Livingstone boys especially in a fever of activity. At the larger cabin a fireplace was built of great rocks, for both Gray and Blake agreed that an open hearth was indispensable to a cheerful cabin. Each one of the four was left free to carry out his own inclinations. There were plenty of pike in Elm Lake, and Gray soon became adept at landing a fish after a good tussle. Up the Kun-ja-muck they went after trout, and anywhere in the woods nearby partridge were plentiful.

Gray and Blake were astounded at the wealth of knowledge, pertaining to nature and

the things of the woods, possessed by Tom and Bill Livingstone; and as time went on, the wonder of the older men grew. Gray had had but a smattering of knowledge regarding the birds of the Adirondacks when he first came away from the city, but under Tom's tutelage he learned to recognize every bird that could be found in that region.

"Tom seems to see everything, and finds it all beautiful or useful," said Gray to Blake one time after a trip into the forest.

While Tom made of himself an expert in building rustic furniture and in the study of birds and flowers, Bill indulged to the limit his fascination for animal life, roots and herbs. Seldom did a day pass without an instance of their uncanny proficiency in the crafts which they loved so well. One day Bill would show Gray a coolworth leaf and explain how the top could be used for healing. Again he amazed both the older men by showing them a supply of balsam bark jelly which he had made up for colds; boneset and smartweed for inflammation and sprains; mountain ash and ironwood to purify the blood; nervine, ginseng—a multitude of things which Gray and Blake had not known were in existence.

One evening just at twilight the campers saw a little man walking slowly down the east bank of the Kun-ja-muck. He was guiding a birch bark canoe by means of a long, slender pole

fastened to its bow. The craft was loaded enough to make it ride steadily as the current carried it downstream and to hold its course through the occasional rapids. At first the men at the Silver Brook cabin were uncertain as to the stranger's identity and the cargo which he had packed in the canoe. Blake walked up the opposite bank of the stream until he came even with the stranger.

"Hullo, Theodore!" he suddenly called out. "What yuh got thar?"

"I'll see yuh over thar, Jack, soon's I git t' Silver Brook," replied Theodore, who was, apparently, an old friend of Blake's. "I'm goin' t' camp here fer th' night."

"Yuh're most thar," shouted Blake. "We've built a couple o' cabins right on th' point thar, an' 'spect t' stay all winter."

"I want t' know!" ejaculated Theodore. "Best place on th' Kun-ja-muck, 'ceptin' two."

"Waal, we thought 'twas th' best," affirmed Blake. "Whar's th' other two places?"

"Tell yuh wen I git thar," said Theodore, and proceeded along the bank, loosening the canoe from a rock or a sand bar occasionally as he slowly advanced. Blake watched him pole the canoe close to the shore. Stepping carefully into the craft, Theodore stepped over something lying in the bottom, gave one mighty push with the pole, and shot the canoe into the mouth of Silver Brook.

"What's that in the canoe?" shouted Tom Livingstone, leading Gray and his brother Bill in the chase to meet Blake and Theodore.

"Two bear—a mother an' her cub," replied Blake.

Theodore beached the canoe, lighted his old pipe, and, after greeting Gray and the boys, told how he happened to have such a strange cargo.

"I was jest wanderin' 'round," he drawled in the slow, deliberate way of the woodsman, "sizin' things up fer th' huntin' season—it begins purty soon now, yuh know. Didn't want t' kill nothin', jest sort o' had my gun along fer comp'ny. Seen lots o' deer tracks up 'round Hunphrey Mountain, an' I was jest browsin' 'bout up thar when I see the back end o' somethin' stickin' out 'hind a big rock. I wa'n't aimin' t' shoot nothin', but when I see this here thing move an' stand up on th' rock jest 's much 's t' say 'Come on now, let 'er fire'—waal, I jest couldn't help pullin' th' ol' gun up t' my shoulder an' lettin' 'er go. Drawed a bead on her heart, an' in a second I thought 'twas all over.

"I see her fall er spring off'n th' rock, didn't know which, but seein' as she was out o' sight I thought it'd be better t' wait an' see 'f she'd git up agin. 'F she did, I wa'n't aimin' t' be too near, yuh know. Waal, I'm plumb derned 'f I didn't see what I thought was that thar

bear go sneakin' 'round th' other rocks an' go climbin' fast up th' mountain. I couldn't git a good aim at her 'coun o' th' rocks an' bushes.

"I says t' myself, says I, 'That's thunderin' funny—I could o' swore that bullet o' mine cut her heart plumb in two.' 'Twas 'bout 'leven o'clock in th' mornin', judgin' from th' shadows. Waal, when I see that thar wa'n't nothin' more movin' I walked over t' that rock t' see if thar was any more tracks, an' right on t'other side whar I see that bear tumble lay this here big one, th' mother! She was hit jest whar I aimed fer—an' she died so quick she didn't git a chance t' say good-bye er give any advice. I could tell by her breast that she was nursin' one cub anyways. I knew he'd git lonesome fer his ma, an' 'f I waited 'round thar long enough, he'd come back after a while t' git his dinner.

"Would yuh b'lieve it, but that thar little feller waited 'til 'bout three hours ago 'fore he dared t' show his nose agin! I heard him comin' a longways away. He was cryin' jest like a baby, an' I let him come 'til I could hear him sobbin'. He'd take a couple o' steps, then wait a minute, an' when he was sure thar wa'n't nobody 'round he cried all th' louder. I didn't kill him 'cause I wanted to, but I decided th' best way t' cheer him up was t' send him t' th' happy huntin' grounds same's th' mother. So here they be, th' both of 'em.''

"We know how yuh hate t' kill," observed Blake drily. "Yuh were probably jest sizin' things up like yuh say—but with th' understandin' 'tween you an' th' gun that nothin' 'd git by yuh. Waal, come on up, Theodore, an' have some supper. Yuh c'n sleep in th' shack over thar—it's warm, an' a good shelter if it should rain er snow th' way it's liable to."

Theodore sat down to supper with the four campers; he ate fast, shovelling great spoonfuls of food into his mouth and gulping like a starved animal.

"Now tell us, Theodore," said Blake after they had been eating for a few minutes, "what are th' two camp sites yuh like better'n this one here?"

Theodore laid down his spoon, more because he was forced to take a breathing spell than because he wanted to answer Blake.

"Th' first best place on th' Kun-ja-muck fer a camp is up t' th' cave, er near it. D'yuh ever take a drink o' that spring water up thar? Best stuff in th' world. Second best campin' place is whar ol' Canuck Louie's got his clearin'. It's right plumb in th' middle o' th' trout fishin'—them lakes, Owl, Rock, an' Long, is full. An' deer—say, they come up an' eat out'n yer hand. I don't git a chance t' go 'round here much when Louie an' that feller that lives in th' Kun-ja-muck Cave are here. Louie's got so damn funny like—he used t' kill

these wild critters worse'n me, but now I swear he'd kill me instead 'f he ketched me shootin' round here in th' Kun-ja-muck country. 'Spose you fellers are lookin' t' capture th' cave man, ain't yuh?"

Theodore finished with a leer at Gray and Blake, and commenced to eat again. His auditors made no reply, but glanced at each other significantly. The hunter at length finished his supper and settled back comfortably, picking his teeth with a splinter of wood.

"Waal," he said finally, as the others made no effort to open conversation, "I used t' think I'd like t' see that critter too, but fer nigh onto four years I've done my huntin' 'round Whitaker Lake an' as far north 's Squaw Brook—jest so thar'd be no danger o' runnin' onto him er Louie. It's most time fer 'em t' come up th' Kun-ja-muck, so I'm headin' west an' south—they're comin' east. Don't look fer me in th' mornin', boys, 'cause I'm goin' 'fore daylight, an' it'll be a long time 'fore I come this way agin!"

# CHAPTER XX.

## A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

So you fell just now in the mud, poor heart,
  And to try to rise and be clean is vain?
Take both my hands, now, and do your part,
  So you stand on your feet again.

Did nobody tell you your feet might slip?
  Did some one push you? (Such things are done.)
Was your path so rough that you needs must trip?
  Ah! The blame is on many—not on one.

Sobbing still over that ugly stain?
  I may not comfort nor hush you, dear.
Through such sad tears in their burning rain
  Christ and his cross show clear.

Must you go sorrowing all your day?
  Dear, in suffering souls grow white;
Keep my hand through this stormy way—
  See where the west turns bright.

FOR the next week Gray and Blake, with the assistance of Tom and Bill Livingstone, continued to improve the Silver Brook camp, making it snug and fit for the cold weather. In their leisure time they explored the Kun-ja-muck country, Blake acting as guide and mentor to his three less experienced companions. The region close to Louie's clearing and the cave, however, they forbore to trespass, deciding, quite wisely, to go there only upon invitation.

Mattie, Mrs. Livingstone, and Uncle David had been guests at the Silver Brook cabin upon two occasions, once for an overnight stay and again merely for lunch. They had pronounced their visits delightful, and manifested great interest in the furnishing of the camp. Bill had gathered boxes of roots, bark, leaves and berries for medicinal purposes, and took pride in exhibiting his knowledge and skill to friends who came to the camp. In the two cabins one might see smartweed, tied in attractive little bunches, and clusters of tansy hanging from the beams; sassafras, balsam gum and jelly were boxed up in large quantities. The rustic furniture gave undeniable proof that Gray and Tom had worked hard since settling on the Kun-ja-muck.

The night before the opening of the hunting season, the four campers sat before the cheery fire. For several days they had heard shots, but by whom fired or at what mark, they had not been able to discover.

Almost in a whisper Blake said, "T'morrow yuh'll see deer bein' pulled down th' trails, an' fer thirty days they'll be slaughtered right an' left. We've got t' be careful how we wander 'round while th' huntin' season's on."

"I suppose that's why Mattie brought us these red caps," said Gray.

"Did she?" questioned Bill. "That's just like her."

"Huh," grunted Blake, "them red caps ain't half enough fer some o' these here city fellers that git all excited when they go huntin'."

"Be careful what you say about city folk," cautioned Gray. "We're three to one here."

"So yuh be," answered Blake laughingly. "Tom an' Bill have lived so long here in th' hills, I plumb forgot they wa'n't our own folks. Waal, any of us is liable t' shoot 'fore we think, I guess."

The night was growing very cold, and Gray arose to close the door of the cabin. Returning to his seat, he stirred the logs into brighter flame and again sat down.

"Jest watch th' deer leave th' valley now an' climb up t' th' higher places," said Blake after a time. "Them poor brutes seem t' know th' very day when th' huntin' season opens."

So busy were they discussing the hunting season that they failed to hear the first rapping at the door of the cabin. At the second knocking, more vigorous and excited than the first, they stopped their conversation sharply; Bill jumped from his place and opened the door. Blinking in the sudden glare from the fire stood a grimy and unkempt individual, at once both bedraggled and threatening in appearance. He did not offer to step inside and Bill did not invite him in.

Blake walked to the door with an angry light in his eyes, and stood beside the boy in silence.

Gray had never seen the newcomer before and wondered who this evil looking person could be. His hair was long and tangled, and his thin, sinister face was covered with a scraggy beard. A feverish light shone from his deep-set eyes, and his shoulders drooped abjectly. In front of him rested his gun, the butt on the ground and the end of the barrel pointing towards his body. Presently, when his eyes had become accustomed to the light, he removed his battered hat and made as if to speak. No sound came from between the stained and yellow teeth; and Blake addressed the other first.

"So, it's you, is it?" he said, not mentioning the man's name.

"Yep, it be," the little man answered in a deep growling bass that was incongruous with his size. "Thought I'd call an' see yuh!"

"Wonder yuh didn't call when we was away," snapped Blake, his hostility perfectly evident.

"That's th' way yuh all talk," whined the visitor, drawing himself together as if to shrink within himself. "I don't mean no harm, an' I ain't come t' aske yuh no favors, neither. I ain't come in, an' I reckon yuh c'n fergive me fer knockin' on yer door."

Hat in hand, he turned slowly away. Gray suddenly stepped to Blake's side and whispered "Who is he?"

"Old Abe Smith!" muttered Blake.

"Let's not turn him away," said Gray. "Maybe he's hungry."

"Waal," said Blake dubiously, "I dunno. He's a bad lot—yuh don't know him same's I do."

"Nevertheless, Louie told us there was hope even for old Abe. Let's try it and see."

"Why not feed him and wait 'til Louie comes—then see what he says?" suggested Tom.

"All right," said Blake, a bit grudgingly.

Abe had disappeared in the darkness, but the cabin door was still open. Blake went forth into the night, and those in the cabin could hear his shouts of "Oh, Abe!" echoing down the valley. In a moment, from far down the Kun-ja-muck, near the rapids, came the answer.

"I'm goin'. Old Abe ain't goin' t' hurt none of yuh!"

"Here, we want t' see yuh—come back!" shouted Blake again.

There was no reply this time, but those listening could hear the swish of the swift water against the canoe, and knew that it was coming nearer.

Gray and Tom ran to the shore and helped Abe pull up on the pebbles.

"What'd yuh say yuh wanted?" inquired Abe, huddling down inside his threadbare mackinaw.

"I said we wanted yuh t' come in an' stay

with us," replied Blake, his tone considerably more friendly than it had been when Abe stood before the door. Blake knew that his three companions desired to be kind to Abe; and he himself only mistrusted the visitor because of past experience with him.

"Louie'll soon come from West Canada Lake, and he'll be glad to see you," broke in Bill.

"Me!" exclaimed Abe, incredulously. "Me! Stay here with *you!* I might steal somethin'." He laughed a guttural laugh, full of a tragic sarcasm.

"Louie's your friend, Abe," said Gray. "Come in, we won't turn you away."

Abe followed haltingly as the others went toward the cabin. Reaching the doorway, Gray and Blake stood aside to let him pass. He stopped, glanced uncertainly at them, as if expecting to be driven away at the last minute, and then passed inside. Without a word they indicated a seat before the fire, which Abe accepted. Under the influence of the warm blaze and the sympathetic silence of the other four persons, Abe seemed to lose a little of his air of abjectness. He looked searchingly at one after another, and found in their faces no reason for fear. Presently, feeling that he owed them some explanation of his appearance, he began to tell his story.

"Fer years," he commenced, "I got no

frien'. Everybody call me thief, outlaw, bad man—so what's th' use? Yuh'll be jest what they say yuh be anyways. Then Louie come 'long one time, an' he says t' me, 'Abe, you be my brother an' I be yourn. My camp's allers open, an' what I got t' eat you c'n eat too.' Ain't anybody ever told me that b'fore."

Abe became silent again. "Louie's changed an awful lot," he said presently. "I knocked at th' door t'night because Louie says t' me, 'Abe, you find 'em an' let me know!' "

"What's that yuh say?" ejaculated Blake in surprise.

"Louie sent you!" exclaimed Gray.

"Yep," said Abe, rubbing his stubby beard reflectively. "I been helpin' Louie fer a couple o' days. He come back from Canada Lake, an' I helped him with packs an' deer an' some other things. Big man—lives up t' th' cave—is goin' t' come some other day, but not with us."

As Gray and Blake looked at each other in amazement, Abe cast a furtive look toward the door as if preparing for a hasty exit. He seemed to think he had said too much.

"When did you reach Louie's camp?" asked Gray, reassuringly.

"T'day noon," replied Abe.

"When did you see Louie last, Abe?" interrupted Bill, who was obviously more inter-

ested in the old Frenchman than in his companions.

"Noon," was Abe's answer. "We had somethin' t' eat, an' then Louie says, 'Go down an' find 'em an' tell 'em I'm here, an' I'll be down in a couple o' days.' "

"Where did you get supper?" asked Gray.

"Didn't have none—jest kep' on huntin' fer yuh 'til I seen yer light."

"Waal," said Blake, "I'm glad we called yuh back. Guess we better make yuh some coffee an' fry some ham an' eggs."

Blake had lost all his hostility toward Abe since learning that he had been sent by Louie, and felt rather ashamed at his first outburst of resentment against the visitor. He now determined to make amends, knowing that Louie would not be deceived in Abe.

"Don't bother 'bout me," said Abe gruffly. "Guess I c'n stand it 'til mornin'."

"No yuh don't," asserted Blake firmly. "Sit right whar yuh be, an' we'll all hustle on th' grub."

As they bustled about the cabin preparing supper for Abe, he saw that the distrust with which they had first received him was gone from their faces. After supper Blake offered to play barber, and old Abe knew himself in the hands of friends. His hair was trimmed and washed, and Blake shaved him. Bill helped

him off with his boots, which he wore without socks. His heels were blistered and his back sore from the heavy packs which he had been carrying.

"Louie an' me come over th' Milit'ry Road," he explained. "We come 'cross Injun Lake road up whar Perkins' Camp used t' be 'fore th' state tore it down. Struck ont' th' trail past th' ol' Injun clearin' an' follered it up t' Dug Lakes, past Owl Pond. Thought I'd drop out a couple o' times, 'count o' my back an' heels hurtin' so, but I couldn't tell Louie. Then when he says t' find yuh, first I kind o' says t' myself 'I can't.' Then I says, 'Waal, I may's well try it.' "

Blake looked at him quickly, and Abe met his look for the first time without flinching.

"I'm sorry I didn't ask yuh in in th' first place," said Blake frankly.

"Waal," conceded the grotesque visitor, "I ain't blamin' yuh none. Yuh used t' know me. Them days was bad. Everybody called me a thief—an' I was one. I didn't know no better. Nobody ever teached me no different."

Very soon Abe crawled into a bunk, a great deal warmer and softer than any he had been in for a long time, and was asleep in a moment.

"Think of it," said Tom to Bill, "Louie's at his camp only four miles from here, and sends us word that he'll soon be down!"

"That is to say," broke in Gray, a bit grimly,

"he wants to see us—and will come down here rather than have us go to his camp."

Blake laughed at the humor of the situation. "Don't yuh notice how careful he is t' find out whar we're located b'fore th' strangers come down t' th' cave?"

"I thought of that," admitted Gray, "but I think he'll be satisfied, especially when he sees or knows where our camp is placed. They'll have right of way over both trails, you know."

"Huh!" grunted Blake, "he might think that from this here central location we c'n keep a watch on both trails."

"We could easily do it," said Gray. "We must make it clear to Abe that we chose this spot away from the trails so as not to interfere with the hunters, and so that they wouldn't disturb us. We needn't give any other reasons. The 'Big Man' and the 'queen' will probably follow after Louie, perhaps leaving a day or two later, and will remain at Louie's camp up here on the Kun-ja-muck until he puts things to rights at the cave and clears the trail for their return."

"Abe called him the 'Big Man'," mused Blake thoughtfully.

"I wonder if he meant big physically or otherwise?" queried Gray. "If they brought the deer and the pets through with them it meant some pretty heavy work."

"Waal, they reached Louie's camp th' day

b'fore th' huntin' season opened. They wouldn't take a chance on bringin' them deer over a day later."

"What do you think Louie will do with them during the hunting season—I mean the deer?" asked Bill eagerly.

"They say he's got a reg'lar stockade connected t' th' back o' his camp," explained Blake. "That's whar he keeps his pets when thar's any danger."

"That's a splendid idea," said Gray in admiration of Louie's ingenuity.

"Well, that part of it might be all right," said Bill, "but it wouldn't be safe for Louie to leave the place during the hunting season, would it?"

"City folks wouldn't disturb 'em, but some o' these here old hunters would. Them fellers say that Louie's got no right t' claim 'em, an' th' law says nobody c'n enclose 'em."

"Louie doesn't mean to break the law," objected Tom rather heatedly. "He's just protecting those tame animals through the season."

"That's all right," said Blake, "but it don't change th' law, or th' feelin's o' Sam an' Sandy, with Mike an' his gang behind 'em."

"I should think," reflected Gray, "that Mike and his gang would try to keep Louie feeling friendly toward them."

"They have," rejoined Blake, "but I'm

afraid they're beginnin' t' think their time's up 's far 's he's concerned, 'specially since Louie didn't take th' bottle o' whiskey Mike sent him. I wouldn't be s'prised 'f they layed fer Louie when he goes t' town this winter. Mike knows he's losin' his grip—maybe he knows it's gone already—an' 'f he c'n git Louie t' drinkin' agin this winter he'll make a pile o' money off'n him. It's goin' t' be a heavy season fer furs. It's a hard thing t' tell—when that gang gits anythin' on yuh—"

Blake looked uneasily toward the bunk where old Abe Smith lay, then shook his head in perplexity. "That's a funny thing," he commented. "Abe was one o' Mike's best bets, an' I allers thought he guarded th' rum trail—him an' ol' Theodore."

Blake glanced again at the bunk, and Gray followed his eyes. A faint smile played about old Abe's lips as he slept.

# CHAPTER XXI.

## LOUIE'S CAMP ON THE KUN-JA-MUCK

I sought for Peace, but could not find:
  I sought it in the city,
But they were of another mind—
  The more's the pity.
I sought for Peace of country swain,
  But yet I could not find;
So I, returning home again,
  Left Peace behind.
Sweet Peace, where dost thou dwell? said I:
  Methought a voice was given,
"Peace dwelt not here, long since did fly
  To God in heaven."
Thought I, this echo is but vain,
  To folly 'tis of kin;
Anon, I heard it tell me plain,
  'Twas killed by sin.
Then I believed the former voice,
  And rested well content;
Lay down and slept, rose, did rejoice,
  And then to heaven went.
Then I enquired for Peace, and found it true—
An heavenly plant it was, and sweetly grew.

THE weeks passed quickly at the Silver Brook camp; hunters had come their way, and friends from Orendaga had made frequent visits to the cabin. Never, however, had they trespassed upon Louie. Tom and Bill watched eagerly for the trapper's promised visit, but the others made every effort to be unconcerned as to the real purpose of their stay. Louie had said he would come to them,

and, although he had delayed far longer than they expected, they were determined to bide their time, knowing that any untoward advances on their part could but result in failure.

The hunting season had ended and the sound of the rifle was stilled. Winter was upon them with all its bleakness.

Tom Livingstone, who stood one afternoon in the doorway of his cabin, looking out towards the Kun-ja-muck, startled his companions with a sudden shout: "There goes a bear!"

The others rushed to the door in time to see their odd visitor lumbering down the trail. As he disappeared from sight Blake saw something which caused him a low exclamation of surprise. Pointing toward Lonely Brook, he indicated five deer which stood close together, looking at the camp as though holding a council to question the right of the squatters.

"I've seen them deer b'fore," commented Blake in a whisper.

"Quiet!" cautioned Gray. "We may see some one passing!"

"Hope Louie's near," said Bill to Tom.

"Maybe, but you keep quiet anyway," replied the elder, vexed at his brother's boyish eagerness.

With a sudden movement the deer disappeared, leaving the place in silence, save for the wind sighing through the firs.

"Strange!" mused Blake, and led the way into the cabin again.

"Did you see anything?" asked Tom anxiously, but in a subdued tone, when they entered the cabin.

"Not a hair o' nothin'," replied Blake.

"You didn't?" broke in Bill incredulously, as though he questioned either Blake's veracity or powers of observation.

"I don't believe," said Blake slowly, "that Louie was thar."

"Neither do I," vouchsafed Gray.

"Well, the bear and deer weren't travelling alone, were they?" asked Bill.

"Don't get excited," remonstrated Gray. "'The Mystery' was at our very door, apparently, even within speaking distance, but went on somewhere else."

"Them were Louie's deer fer sure," affirmed Blake. "Yuh don't s'pose he's movin' 'em back t' th' Canada Lake cabin?"

"It doesn't seem possible," rejoined Gray, "yet perhaps—"

"Perhaps what?" broke in Blake.

"Perhaps that explains Louie's invitation. The strangers will stay over in the other cabin, while Louie entertains us here. We were very cleverly removed from the scene of action, I guess. With them in the Canada Lake cabin, and us in the Kun-ja-muck region, Louie can be sure that our trails don't cross."

Blake's jaw dropped in consternation. "Mebbe," he said. "Mebbe."

This interpretation of the movements of Louie's pets was accepted; and low spirits prevailed in the Silver Brook cabin that evening.

"I wish Louie'd come," sighed Bill, "like he said he would. Hanging around here isn't much fun—"

"I guess you're having a good time!" rebuked his brother. "You sure ought to be glad you're here. Think how you'd feel if you weren't invited!"

Blake, who hated to see the boys downhearted, took his violin from the shelf, and, for the first time in a week, began to play. He was in a thoughtful mood and there seemed to be unusual music in his bow; he played until a late hour, when the fire began to turn to glowing embers. When the boys had gone to bed, Gray threw on another log and sat talking. Never before had their hopes been at so low an ebb. Louie had promised to visit them long ago; but now he had delayed for many weeks. Perhaps old Abe had been a spy for the mysterious strangers—the "governor" and the "queen." And then, perhaps they had been observing the Silver Brook camp that very afternoon when the deer appeared.

"It's not the first time they've had their eagle eyes on us!" said Gray.

"Jest what I was thinkin'," replied Blake. "All th' time we were on th' island o' Peaceful Haven they had us in sight. An' th' day we left th' island fer Brook Trout Lake, yuh r'member how they sat in th' King's Chair, lookin' at us all th' time."

"I certainly do remember," said Gray emphatically. "I'm convinced that they're interested in us, or at least are kindly disposed toward us. If they're not, Louie wouldn't have shown us so much attention or talked so freely. He must be the reflection of their feelings toward us."

"Sure, that must be true," replied the other, "but why would they come within a stone's throw o' th' camp an' then disappear?"

"That's a mystery—but why have they been in these wilds for over three years, steadily shunning every living soul except Louie?"

"I guess th' myst'ry o' th' cave is allers goin' t' be a myst'ry," sighed Blake.

"Cheer up, old man," encouraged Gray. "We'll solve it if there is a solution, and I know there is. It takes time."

It was a cold night; the wind howled and moaned in the pines about the cabin, and out in the hills it made a great soughing echo as it swept along with irresistible force. There had been a light snowfall late that afternoon, and now the moon was brilliant with a cold radiance. The stars sparkled like diamonds in

the sky; the Milky Way was as an arch of snow built to truss the dome of the heavens. The cabin windows were covered with a heavy frost, and Gray had to be content with looking through a small corner of a pane as he glanced out on the night before slipping into his bunk.

It was Blake's turn to build the morning fire and start the breakfast. When the sun began to brighten the ice-covered window panes he crawled from his bunk, reaching for his clothes and boots.

As he looked toward the end of the room he uttered an exclamation of wonderment, rubbed his eyes, and looked again. On the back of a chair near the door sat Nigger, and on the seat of the same chair lay Friskey, curled up on Tom's sweater. Without making any more noise than necessary, Blake dressed and then walked slowly to the pets. Louie was sleeping soundly on a bench near the fireplace, his old coonskin coat thrown over himself and a bag filled with balsam for a pillow.

Blake was more than delighted. This seemed to vindicate Louie and re-establish his faith in the old French trapper. Deciding not to disturb either Louie or the other three campers, Blake quickly built the fire. Only Nigger stirred during this operation; taking his head from under his wing, the crow stretched first his left wing and leg, then the right. He turned an inquiring eye upon Louie, noted that his

master was still sleeping, and replaced his head under his wing as though "forty winks" were to him, as to so many human beings, the thing for which the early morning is made. Friskey remained rolled up in a little round ball, showing his appreciation of the excellent bed which fortune had provided. The chill of the cabin was soon dissipated by a warm fire, and Blake continued his preparations for breakfast with less caution.

Tom was the first of the others to rouse himself. He sat up, rubbed his eyes and forehead, sniffed, and smiled affectionately at Blake. "By all the loves of Pharaoh!" he said, using an exclamation of Gray's which the latter reserved for all extraordinary occasions. "Smell that coffee! And ham and potatoes!" Blake, who was leaning over the stove stirring the oatmeal, smiled back at him knowingly.

"Why didn't you call me?" asked Tom. Still Blake kept silent, only smiling more broadly. Tom reached down for his sweater, and touched Friskey; the squirrel bounded from the chair, wildly chattering, while Tom leaped from his bunk, drawing back his hand as though it had been bitten. Then he saw the pets, and was dumb with amazement. Blake continued to stir the cereal, his smile widening into a grin.

"By all the loves of Pharaoh!" said Tom for the second time. "Louie's here! He must be! There's the crow and squirrel!" The

boy had failed to notice Louie's slumbering form stretched out on the bench.

Gray and Bill were aroused by Tom's exclamation, and sat up wondering at all the excitement. Blake pointed toward Louie, who had not moved; Tom crawled from his blankets and tiptoed to the bundle of coonskin which Blake had dared to intimate was their beloved Louie. Even Blake himself had not seen the trapper's face, but he knew the coat; that, with the pets was sufficient proof of their guest's identity. Tom, however, was not so easily satisfied. Reaching the side of the sleeping form, he hesitated, then mustered sufficient courage to pull down the covering until the man's face was fully exposed to view. Then he smiled with delight. Louie opened his eyes slowly and, seeing the boy, they filled with tenderness.

"Ma frien' Tom!" he exclaimed. "W'y, you are boy no more!"

And, pushing the coonskin coat away, he sat up on the bench.

"Come on, Bill!" cried Tom. "Here's Louie! Ah, we've got you this time, Louie! You used to run away from us, but now you're cornered!"

For the next few minutes the cabin rang with the merriment of the boys and Louie, while Gray and Blake, after greeting the old Frenchman, watched the fun. Tom and Bill

scolded the trapper for not awakening them when he came in, so that a better bed could have been made for him, and chided him for not coming sooner. Nigger flew to Louie's head and Friskey perched on his shoulders, much to the amusement of all.

"I not able for come wen I want," said Louie finally. "I 'ave to watch ze deer—mooch honters come, an' I could not let heem out unteel yesterday."

"We saw them," blurted Bill, while Tom looked at his younger brother in sublime disgust.

"Oui, I know," replied Louie, glancing at Bill and overlooking Tom's expression entirely. "Mais you 'ave not ask heem in."

"We didn't see anybody to ask!" exclaimed Tom.

"I know," smiled Louie. "I an' ma frien', we desire for rest wan moment, an' eet ees mooch safer here off ze trail. I 'ave help heem on ze Kun-ja-muck, an' now I am come back here for mak you leetle veesit."

With that, Louie suggested that they breakfast.

It was a joyous day for everyone at the Silver Brook camp; even Nigger and Friskey seemed to be unusually lively. Louie was as much, if not more, delighted to see the Livingstone boys as they were to see him, and he enjoyed their youthful good humor immensely.

They showed him their rustic furniture and the bird boxes they had built. He examined their handiwork carefully, affectionately, and praised it to the skies.

"You are artiste, lak ze fat'er!" he would exclaim over and over again.

In the evening, when the shrill north wind howled through the valley with a long drawn, eerie cry, the campers and their guest settled around the fire, sitting on the rustic lounge and the bearskin rug before the hearth. Louie regaled them with stories of Canada and fierce tales of the forest. He made no reference to the strangers in his keeping, but told of his boyhood, of heroic river people, of voyageurs in the great woods. Later, when he had ceased his stories, his eye fell upon Blake's violin.

"Ah, ma frien', play for me!" he pleaded, turning to Blake.

"But what'll I play?" queried the one addressed, a little taken aback.

"Ah, eet ees not matter—anyt'ing, so you play. La musique of violin, ma frien', eet ees si belle, si sweet!"

As Blake hesitated, wondering what would please the old trapper, Louie continued his pleading.

"Eet mak ze music so I could cry, sometam. I 'ave not hear heem for many year, long tam ago—"

Blake commenced to draw the bow across

the strings; and as he played a hush fell upon the room and its occupants. The old trapper sat quiet as some shy, timid child of the forest while Blake played song after song. The woodsman put his whole soul into the tones of the instrument; for it was a supreme thing in his life, his easiest means of self-expression. When he had finished, and sat down again on the lounge, Louie suddenly recalled himself from the reverie into which he had fallen and asked for more.

So Blake stole softly into the opening bars of the Bach-Gounod prayer, the Ave Maria. Louie sat as one entranced; and Gray was profoundly moved. Blake played the exquisite melody with a tender beauty and feeling. The last note died away, and only the snapping of the fire could be heard. At last, after several long minutes, Louie spoke softly.

"I 'ave hear ze Ave Maria long tam ago—in church San' Michel—au Canada—long tam ago—"

The next afternoon found them all comfortably settled in Louie's spacious log camp farther up the Kun-ja-muck, for he had insisted that they move up there and visit him until after Christmas; he had helped them pack their baskets at the Silver Brook cabin early that morning, and, with Blake, had returned later in the day with his sledge to bring up what supplies they could not carry. Louie's cabin

was much larger and more substantially built than their own, and had, with age, grown in dignity. Nothing about it had the appearance of being new. It was like an old homestead as compared with a new estate. There were two big windows at either end of the living room; at one side was a huge stone fireplace and at the other a built-in sideboard of curly maple, trimmed with yellow birch. The furniture was all hand-made, rough but comfortable, and withal finished with the deft touches of a master craftsman.

When they were settled, Louie began to measure out flour and other things at his kitchen table.

"What are you going to make, Louie?" asked Tom.

"I am goin' mak ze good ol' doughnut," he chuckled.

"Teach us, will you, Louie?" begged Bill. "You must be a great cook!" There was admiration in the boy's voice, and it pleased the old trapper to receive such a compliment from the boys whom he loved in his peculiar way.

"Sapré!—Eef you want!" he exclaimed. "Now, do lak I am tol' you. Tak two egg an' put heem in deesh wit' two cup of ze w'ite sugar you 'ave breeng. Now tak spoon an' beat heem—" He continued with his directions until the dough was ready.

Gray and Blake were as interested as the

boys in seeing how the doughnuts would turn out. Tom cut them into shape and Bill dropped them into the kettle of hot grease, while Louie himself turned them over with a freshly whittled stick, his eyes gleaming with pleasure and pride. The old Frenchman was as happy as a child.

"Look at 'em swell!" cried Bill, as Gray accepted the first one from the end of Louie's stick, divided it with Blake, and pronounced it fit for royalty.

"What's that scratching on the door?" suddenly asked Gray, poising another doughnut half-way to his mouth.

"I hear heem," said Louie. "I 'ave know t'ey would come wen t'ey smell ze smoke from cheemney."

"What is it?" demanded Tom.

"Open ze door, an' you see," replied Louie, laughingly.

Tom did so—but very cautiously. He was not prepared, however, for the avalanche of animals which rushed through the doorway—two otter, a bear and a skunk. Letting go of the door, the boy leaped for the table top; and in another moment Bill landed beside him. Gray and Blake, although expecting something of the sort, were momentarily startled out of their usual composure; the former established himself in a corner, ready to swing a chair for self-protection, while Blake laid hold on an

iron poker. Louie doubled with laughter at the performance, and having caught his breath sufficiently to speak, he called his pets to his side.

"Heck t'ere, come now, heck t'ere!"

The animals seemed to understand him perfectly, for they scampered to him immediately. The bear growled and bared his teeth, while the skunk straddled one of Louie's feet and stood on his hind legs, trying to reach his master's knee. Cautiously Louie gave each one a doughnut. The otter and bear ate with such extraordinary rapidity, however, that Louie called again.

"Heck, heck, not so fas'! Wan more ees all wat you get. Heck now, heck, heck!"

"Is that the Kitty Cobble bear?" queried Blake.

"Oui, eet ees heem," answered Louie. "I 'ave spoil heem, for he ees ze baby, an' I feel ze sorrow for hees mot'er."

Louie opened the door which led into the corral, and with a commanding gesture ordered them all to go. Instead of obeying they went in the opposite direction, Louie remaining at the open doorway. "Heck now, come, heck!" he said quietly, but as his pets continued to disobey, the old trapper's voice rose in a crescendo. Stamping his foot, he called again: "Heck now, come, heck!" The skunk yielded first, then the otter, but the bear, Baby, had no

intention of heeding his master's call. "Come now, Baby, heck, heck!" called Louie. The bear turned his head slightly, showing his teeth, and growled fiercely. Louie looked at him for a moment. "You talk lak t'at, eh? Moi, I see who ees ze boss!" He walked to the stove and took the iron poker from Blake's hand. Brandishing the weapon, Louie shouted: "Sapristi! Va! Queeck!" Baby needed no further persuasion, but went out into the corral, like a petulant child.

"Come," said Louie to the boys. "I show you w'ere t'ey leeve. T'at ees ze house for Baby, là bas; Weenkie an' Bleenkie chez là," pointing to another well-built den, "an t'at leetle wan b'long for Scenty. Ze animal, t'ey come an go wen t'ey lak. Each wan, he 'ave hees secret way for come in an' go out. I show you some day. Baby, he go way down ze Kun-ja-muck for see hees frien' ever' day, but he arrive back wen he teenk Louie come home. He was wan tam ze baby for Louie, mais not now—he ees beeg bear, an' want hees own way ver' mooch. He 'ave ze good breengin' up, mais I teenk he forget sometam."

"Lots of us are like that bear," observed Gray, and turned back into the cabin.

# CHAPTER XXII.

## AN ADIRONDACK CHRISTMAS

Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!
Christmas in lands of the fir tree and pine;
Christmas in lands of the palm tree and vine;
Christmas where snow peaks stand solemn and white;
Christmas where corn fields lie sunny and bright;

Christmas where children are hopeful and gay;
Christmas where old men are patient and gray;
Christmas where peace, like a dove in his flight,
Broods o'er brave men in the thick of the fight;
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

For the Christ-child who comes is the master of all,
No palace too great and no cottage too small.

—*Phillips Brooks.*

IT was two evenings before Christmas when Louie outlined his plans for that great day.

"To-morrow," he began, "we mak ze Chrees'mas deener an' mak ready for ze Sant' Claus." He looked at the boys and smiled fondly.

"I'm afraid," said Gray "that he won't come way up here. He'll get lost or stuck in the snow."

"He 'ave come ever' weenter for t'ree year," maintained Louie, and fell into a deep study. Presently he spoke again. "I 'ave nevaire forget ze night, t'ree year ago, wen he come knock on ze door. I 'ave forget ze Chrees'mas for mooch year before t'at tam, an' I was 'lone an' was not ver' frien'ly. He come knock—

ze can'le eet was burn jus' leetle, an' I open ze door an' stan' lookin' at heem an' ze leetle Sant' Claus. I say not'ing. I 'ave not know eet ees Chrees'mas, an' I 'ave not care mooch at all. Ol' Sant' he stan' outside in snow an' col' wit' door open an' me inside—he say, 'We 'ave come, M'sieu Louie, for breeng you ze merry Chrees'mas.' An' t'en I see ze leetle Sant' peekin' 'roun' ol' Sant'. She 'ave ze beeg blue eye, shine in ze dark lak snowflake in sun. Sapré! Wen I 'ave not ask heem in, Sant' Claus he say: 'Well Louie, I teenk we mus' come down cheminée, for you no let us in by ze door.' Ah, M'sieu, I was ze blaggar trapper in t'at tam. I 'ave ze hate for ze voyageur, an' I lak eet better for be all 'lone—but ze eye for leetle Sant' hol' me fas', an' I say: 'I no want ze merry Chrees'mas, mais I teenk eet ees good for you come in out of ze col'.' " Louie's eyes took on a dreamy look of reflection. "You know, ma frien', eet was ze firs' tam I 'ave ever see ze queen an' ze Sant' Claus t'at I 'ave call ze gouverneur. T'ey are wan ver' fine people, I am tol' you."

It was the first time Louie had mentioned the queen and the governor since the summer days when Gray and Blake visited with him in the West Canada Lake region.

"You know heem, ver' queeck tam, I teenk," added the trapper. "T'ey 'ave tol' eet to me for me to tell you. Mais, not now."

He turned his back to his guests and spread his hands in the glow of the fire, his head tilted slightly to one side as if listening to the winds howling down the great chimney or for footsteps in the snow.

Suddenly he wheeled about. "An' now I tol' you wat," he smiled, "I want for you read me ze Chrees'mas story. Ze queen, she read heem to me many tam, an' she 'ave tol' me wat eet ees mean. She 'ave show me wat belle story eet ees—wen ze leetle Chris' he ees born long tam' ago an' angel seeng in stars. I lak for you read heem to me wan tam encore."

The old trapper went to a cupboard and drew forth a Bible.

"Ze queen, she 'ave geeve heem to me long tam ago, an' I 'ave read mooch wat he say. Mais I cannot read ver' good."

He opened the Bible slowly, taking much time in finding the place. When he did find it, he handed the book to Blake; and the old woodsman read, in a hesitating, searching way, the story of the Babe of Bethlehem. During the reading Louie stood with his eyes on the fire and his hands clasped behind his back. When Blake finished, the Frenchman took the Bible from him, placed it upon the broad mantel, and again spread out his hands to the blaze, while a silence of wonder fell upon the little group.

Byron Gray had spent much time in reflec-

tion while at Louie's camp those few weeks before Christmas. Now, in the stillness that pervaded the cabin, he tried to realize the change that had come in his life. In the brief space of half a year he had grown to know a great force driving behind all nature—a source of life, a purpose, a majestic destiny for all things living, growing, and striving. Byron Gray was no longer a cynic; the hours of hiking over the trails, the beauty of the magnificent sunsets, the glory of dawn from an Adirondack mountain top, the stillness of dusk, the mellowness of the fire light—these things, with the sincere companionship of Jack Blake and old Louie, had touched the deepest springs of his nature. They had aroused in him a manhood he did not know was there. Paul Ward, too, had been the interpreter of nature and of God. The minister was to Gray a man among men.

And then Gray began to wish that the mystery of the Kun-ja-muck Cave would wait for its solution until the spring-time. He wanted an excuse for staying where he was. Louie had promised that soon they would know all about it, but Gray wondered if he really wanted to know. Enjoying every moment of the old Frenchman's companionship, the city bred man had come to feel a deep affection for Louie, though at first his faith in him had been of the slightest. Gray was now interested in

solving the mystery only because he wanted to know those whose influence had transformed Louie from the sullen, drunken recluse to the genial guide, the friend of all men, the almost mystic prophet of God in nature.

Louie's faith was intangible, but withal simple and sincere. His pets were his companions—God had made them. The sunrise was the smile of the Lord, to him. It was difficult for Louie to explain these things, but his utterly naive conceptions fascinated Gray, who had never before supposed that such beliefs could be found in a rude and untutored trapper. Gray had thus learned what so many of culture's elite are forced to learn at some time in their lives—that the deeper insight and inspired imagination are inherent in mankind, and need not a university training to bring them out. Thus Gray became, in a sense, Louie's disciple.

The Frenchman talked little; for his personality had that about it which made words unnecessary. A deep tenderness spoke from his eyes; and in little things—his consideration of others, his quaint courtesies, his sincere generosity—he impressed those who knew him.

It was Christmas day at dawn. Bill, irrepressible youth, sat up in bed and shouted "Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!"

"You 'wake?" said Louie, smiling at him through the faint light of early morning. "I

teenk Scenty know eet ees Chrees'mas, for he 'ave scratch on ze door for wan hour at leas'!"

Tom opened his eyes, realized that he was not the first one awake, and jumped out of bed.

"Sapré! Don' let heem in, not yet!" called Louie, sitting up.

"I won't," laughed Tom. "I'm going to build a fire first, and warm things up before you get out."

"Ah, you are ze wan good boy, Tom, mon garçon," he said. "Moi, I get ol'—you are young an' 'ave ze gran' strengt'. Sh! Eet ees Scenty again; he 'ave hear ze stove rattle. Eet mak heem want for get in more, an' I teenk eet ees Baby, an' Weenkie an' Bleenkie outside too. T'ey mak ze gran' rush wen ze door ees open!"

Louie, calling to Gray and Blake, got up from his blankets when the fire was briskly burning in the stove.

"Get wan 'alf douzaine doughnut, some sugar in pan, an' four of ze feesh wat we 'ave catch yesterday on Owl Pon'. Eet weel be ze Chrees'mas gif' for ze pets. Ah, here ees Nigger an' Freeskey waitin' for ze gif' too!"

Nigger, with many gestures of leg, wing and head, jabbered violently in crow patois.

"How about the others?" asked Tom of Louie.

"Let heem come," chuckled Louie, and Tom unfastened the door.

With a bang against the door the pets piled into the room, Baby in the lead; Scenty was knocked hither and yon in the mad rush of the others, the penalty for being the slowest.

"Heck, heck, come now, heck!" commanded Louie, trying to secure a little order. "Queet eet, Bleenkie!" Poker in hand, the trapper at last quieted his pets, and even Baby subsided in a corner of the room. Tom gave the bear a sugar and water drink from an empty catsup bottle which was reserved for this very purpose. Baby held it in his forepaws and sat back on his haunches, raising the bottle high as he tried to reach bottom with his long tongue. Seeing the doughnuts, he dropped the bottle and again stood up before Louie with outstretched paw, begging for his share of the food. The fish were given to Winkie and Blinkie; as each took the fish in their mouths they dove for the door.

"Let heem out," said Louie, and the otter went back to the corral to enjoy their Christmas breakfast.

Scenty appeared to be satisfied with anything edible, and remained as near to Louie as possible, until, with Baby, he was sent back to his den.

Gray had dressed during the visit of the pets, and now stood, hands in pockets, looking out of the window upon the snow-covered countryside. There had been a heavy storm in the

night, but the weather was now quite clear. The sun was dazzling in its brightness on the snow; and high drifts made the clearing about the cabin a billowy expanse of glittering whiteness. As Gray's eye roved over the beauty and grandeur of the scene, it rested for a moment on the path leading from the trail to the cabin, and he realized that it had been freshly broken out. He called Louie to the window.

"Ma foi!" exclaimed the old Frenchman in dismay. "I 'ave teenk he come, mais not so soon!"

He went to the door, which opened on a small porch at the front of the cabin, as if expecting to greet visitors. No one was there. Keen disappointment visible in his face, Louie went out onto the porch, with Gray at his heels, and very nearly stumbled over a large canvas bag which lay at one side of the doorway.

"Ah, I 'ave not hear heem!" bewailed Louie in chagrin. "I know he weel come, for eet ees same way ever' Chrees'mas—an' now I 'ave meess heem!"

He looked out over the great white expanse of loveliness. Icicles hung in a long row along the eaves of the building, for it had thawed a little the day before. For a few moments Louie stood there, with the north wind ruffling his hair. Then he turned, threw the bag over his shoulder, and went into the cabin.

"What yuh got thar, Louie?" demanded

Blake in surprise. "Looks t' me like Santy'd been 'round, eh?"

"Eet ees jus' so, M'sieu Jack," replied Louie, his disappointment at missing the donor of the pack somewhat abated by the all too evident pleasure on the faces of Tom and Bill. They crowded around Louie, clamoring to know who had sent the pack and what it contained.

"We mus' 'ave ze breakfas' firs'," stoutly asserted Louie, maintaining his grasp on the canvas bag with some difficulty. The boys were at length persuaded of the wisdom of Louie's suggestion, and busied themselves with setting out the morning meal.

The dishes had been cleared away after breakfast, and Louie had his canvas sack on the table, just at the point of untying the cord around its throat, when there came footsteps on the front porch. Louie stayed his hand and ran to the door, an eager light in his eyes.

"Must be another Santa Claus," said Gray to Blake with a humorous chuckle.

"Mordieu!" they heard Louie's voice from outside, "wat ees eet wat eet ees here! Sapré! Sant' Claus for two tam thees Chrees'mas!" and pushing old Abe Smith before him Louie burst through the doorway.

"Bust me 'f 'tain't Abe!" contributed Blake to the general confusion at the sight of the visitor, who bore on his back an enormous pack basket, apparently well loaded.

Abe shifted from one foot to the other, abashed at the hilarity with which he had been greeted.

"Jest come up fr'm th' village," he explained, "t' bring yuh some stuff fr'm Mattie an' t'other folks down thar."

Forgotten was the canvas bag filled, as Louie rightly supposed, with Christmas gifts from the queen and the governor. Louie cleared the table, helped Abe to lift down his pack, and insisted that he remain as their guest at Christmas dinner.

"Dunno 's I'd oughter," protested Abe. "Mattie's givin' a big Chris'mas dinner down t' th' Bearfoot Inn, an' I'd oughter be thar t' help her git ready. Waal, I guess mebbe I c'n stay here, now 'at I come t' think on it—ol' Theodore'll be thar t' do whatever she wants. Yuh know Teddy ain't workin' fer Mike no more—nope, jest ask Louie here how it come 'at Teddy's workin' fer Mattie 'stead o' Mike Murphy."

Gray and Blake had not known quite what to make of Abe's words, and now their eyes sought Louie for explanation. The old Frenchman said nothing, but the look on his face was enough to make the others realize that he had done for old Theodore the same thing he had done for Abe himself.

The boys laid hold on the basket, after looking mutely at Abe for permission, and began to

take out its contents. Its depths yielded a supply of good things—mince pies, four roasting chickens which were stuffed and ready for the oven, jars of cranberry sauce, sugar cookies, sweet potatoes, and home-made candy done up in boxes tied with red and green ribbon. The masterpiece, however, was a huge Christmas cake, covered with a thick icing in which were several old-fashioned candy mottoes such as Gray had seen at the minstrel show. "I love you," "Meet me when the sun goes down," "The eyes I love are blue," Gray read from among the sentiments expressed.

"Mattie always laughed about them," explained Blake. "I guess she thought she'd play a joke on us!"

From the bottom of the basket the boys drew forth a package of heavy woolen socks, hand knit. They were all exactly alike, save for size, and Bill counted out a pair for each person present except old Abe, who claimed that he had already received his Christmas gifts. At the very bottom of the pack were two knitted sweaters from Mrs. Livingstone to her boys.

"Ah, ma frien'," said Louie when the excitement of discovering the gifts had quieted down, "we 'ave forget thees Sant' Claus!" and he lifted the canvas bag to the table.

Tom and Bill became instantly as tense and eager as though they had not yet received a gift of any kind. Louie loosed the cord while

Gray, Blake and Abe pressed close, looking over the trapper's shoulder. This sack was more interesting to them than the other, in reality, for had it not come from those whom they desired to know more than aught else? Louie had not said as much, but who besides the queen and the governor would play Santa Claus to Louie in this fashion? If Blake's eagerness to know what was in Mattie's pack was intense, no less so was Gray's concern about this sack which Louie was at the moment opening.

In the mouth of the sack was a note, addressed to Louie Lamont. He read it hastily, held it in his hand for a moment while he seemed to think quickly, and tossed it into the fire.

"Ze queen an' ze gouverneur, t'ey sen' ze 'Merry Chrees'mas' to all," he said laconically, and continued to unpack.

There were scarfs and stockings for Louie, and also a heavy knitted sweater. Two elderberry pies were marked: "For Louie and his guests." At the bottom of the bag was a large box which Louie carefully pulled out. Tearing off the lid, he drew forth a beautiful thing and placed it on the mantelpiece over the fireplace. It was a crucifix, carved in a single piece from white ash. It aroused Gray's admiration, as well as that of Blake and the boys.

"Who could have done that?" he exclaimed without thinking.

"Ze gouverneur, he 'ave carve eet," said Louie simply. "I 'ave show heem how for carve long tam ago, an' now he ees ver' good. He 'ave tak mooch tam, maybe all weenter, for mak t'at. Ah, M'sieu, eet ees ver' beauteeful, n'est-ce pas?"

Louie regarded the crucifix in awe for a moment, then called to Abe.

"Come, ma frien' Abe, eet ees tam for mak ze deener. You an' Louie weel get ze deener ready, an' we all eat heem ver' soon. Voilà!" and with a chirp to Nigger and Friskey he commenced to whistle a lively tune, giving Abe directions as they were needed.

The Christmas dinner which Louie prepared was a culinary triumph. The old Frenchman exercised every art he knew which could make either the food or the occasion more enjoyable. As they sat about the table late in the afternoon—for with Louie's stories the meal had taken the better part of the day—Louie's eyes filled with the light of reminiscence which Gray and Blake had come to recognize as the forerunner of some confidence.

"Eet ees ver' strange," began Louie slowly, his eyes fixed on the crucifix, "how ze good Lord—le bon Dieu—'ave tak care for Louie. Firs', long tam ago, I teenk he sen' ol' man—meessionary, ze queen say—to ma mère au

Canada, an' he geeve to her ze Bible. Ma mère, she 'ave read thees Bible, an' she learn how eet ees good t'ing for pray. She pray for me, an' I teenk ze prayer follow me way down here, unteel ze gouverneur an' ze queen come lak Sant' Claus t'ree year ago.

"Ze queen an' ze gouverneur, t'ey 'ave show me ze way. Eef eet was not for t'em I would nevaire know wat ze Chrees'mas story in ze Bible mean, an' wat t'at cross mean. Ah, ma frien', eet ees more t'an two year before I can go down on knee in front of ze cross! Mais, M'sieu, wen I 'ave lay my seen, all my trouble, ever'ting, at ze foot of ze cross—ah, ma frien', I cannot tol' you how I feel—eet ees ze gran' peace, an' I 'ave know t'at God—le bon Dieu —he weel tak care for ol' Louie—"

A shaft from the setting sun, coming through the western window of the cabin, fell upon the carved crucifix in a golden halo as Louie's voice died away into silence.

# CHAPTER XXIII.

## LOUIE SLIPS OUT IN THE NIGHT

Why be afraid of death as though your life were breath?
Death but anoints your eyes with clay. O glad surprise!

Why should you be forlorn? Death only husks the corn.
Why should you fear to meet the thresher of the wheat?

Is sleep a thing to dread? Yet sleeping you are dead
Till you awake and rise, here, or beyond the skies.

Why should it be a wrench to leave your wooden bench?
Why not with happy shout run home when school is out?

The dear ones left behind—O foolish ones and blind,
A day, and you will meet—a night, and you will greet.

This is the death of Death, to breathe away a breath
And know the end of strife, and taste the deathless life.

And joy without a fear, and smile without a tear,
And work, nor care to rest, and find the last the best.

THE Silver Brook camp had again taken on its usual activities. Two weeks had passed since the campers' return from Louie's cabin, and they were daily expecting him to pass by on his way to Orendaga with his load of furs. Gray and Blake had volunteered to help Louie into the village with his heavy packs.

One morning as they were at breakfast, Louie opened the door of their cabin and stuck his head inside. Abe and Theodore were close at his side.

"Jest in time t' eat," greeted Blake, while

the others rose from the table to greet their visitors. Louie did not seem to be himself. The old trapper was pale under his bronzed skin, and his greeting was restrained.

"Bon jour, ma frien'! I lak jus' wan cup coffee. I 'ave ze pain in side," he confessed. "I teenk pack 'ave too mooch heavy, an' maybe I get ol'."

"Yep," broke in Abe, looking at Louie with a worried wrinkle on his forehead, "Louie fell down—fainted—back up th' trail. Worked on his packs all night, 'bout, so's he could start early this mornin'."

"We wanted t' do it fer him," said Theodore, "but th' ol' feller made us go t' bed, an' he kep' on workin'."

"Eet ees not'ing — n'importe," insisted Louie. "I am jus' get ol' an' cannot do so mooch as wen I am young lak Tom here." He attempted a laugh, but suddenly caught his hand to his side and winced. Blake looked at him in quick concern, and helped him into a chair.

"We'll look after him from now on," Gray promised. "There are enough of us here to divide the packs so that Louie won't have to carry anything."

"Huh," grunted Abe, "we ain't goin' t' let yuh go on 'lone. Me an' Theodore'll stick by yuh 'til yuh don't need us no more."

Louie nodded abstractedly, as if he had heard

but did not comprehend. Abe and Theodore sat down and ate a good breakfast, but the trapper only drank a cup of coffee.

"Now I res' unteel you boys ready for go on ze trail again," he said, going to Blake's bunk.

In a little more than an hour they were struggling down the trail through the deep snow, Louie having protested that he was quite fit again and able to hold his own on the march. It was an odd procession, headed by Tom and Bill who pulled the long sled piled with hides, securely tied down; Gray pushed the sled from behind. Then came Louie, followed by Blake who carried the heavy pack, while Abe and Theodore brought up the rear. For much of the way, the trail had to be broken through the snow, and frequent drifts made progress slow and difficult. Toward noon the sun broke through the clouds with a blinding brilliance. Now and again they crossed deer runways, and Louie occasionally pointed out a rabbit and fox tracks along the sides of the trail. Several times he asked to rest after climbing a hill or plodding through an unusually deep drift. Alarmed glances passed from man to man among the others, for it was indeed strange that Louie should lag behind or accept any assistance on the trails over the mountains. He took advantage of his resting periods to talk, in disconnected phrases, of his love for

this valley of the Kun-ja-muck, and delighted in praising every outstanding and peculiarly shaped hill. Again he would stand in silent admiration of the beautiful panoramas before them as the little cavalcade crossed some higher elevation.

It was on their way down from Elm Lake, just before they made the curve toward Orendaga, that Blake observed Louie walking with his left hand pressed tightly against his heart. Twice the old trapper was asked to ride the rest of the way on top of the load of furs; and as Gray heard the proposal he turned sharply to get its meaning, for to add more to the load which they were already tugging would make the progress almost impossible. He caught Blake's look and realized that the situation was serious.

"Come, Louie," he urged firmly, "we can get along all right. You stretch out on top and help to hold the top skins on."

"No, no, ma frien'," replied the trapper. "Eet ees not'ing. Jus' go slow—eet ees leetle hard for walk; we are not far from ze village now."

What it cost Louie Lamont to walk down the Kun-ja-muck trail, his friends were not to know until later; he talked little, practically none, of his illness, his concern being for those who were bearing his load. He worried more about their fatigue than his own pain.

They reached the Bearfoot Inn just at dark. Great was the delight of those who had watched for their coming, and word soon went about the village that Gray and Blake had returned with Louie Lamont.

Mike and his gang gathered that night behind closed blinds, discussing ways and means of getting the money which Louie would receive from his furs; but a very different scene was taking place at the Bearfoot Inn. In the Woods Room were gathered Mattie, Uncle David, and Mrs. Livingstone, with those who had come down from the Silver Brook Camp. Louie was given the place of honor before the great open fire; he sat in the big chair, where Mattie had put a cushion under his back and a pillow under his head. Tom and Bill vied with each other in removing the old Frenchman's boots, drawing on to his feet a pair of knitted woolen slippers which Mattie insisted that he wear. Louie let them have their way; his smile was wan, the ghost of what it had formerly been. He seemed very tired, but otherwise comfortable, apparently as contented and as much at home as though it were his own family in his camp on the Kun-ja-muck.

Presently he asked Blake to play for them; and so they spent the evening, Mattie accompanying Blake on the piano. Louie had mentioned his desire to purchase his supplies the next day, in order that he might get back to

the woods as soon as possible, and the protests of his friends could not dissuade him from the idea. He insisted that his heart would be as sound as ever in the morning and asked that he be called for breakfast.

Gray and Blake assisted him up the stairs and saw him safely in bed.

"You 'ave mak me ver' happy, ma frien'," said the old trapper. The candle was then blown out and they bade him "Good-night!"

Uncle David had sounded the first gong for breakfast before Gray and Blake met in the living room. Mattie and the Mother of the Inn gave them a cheery "Good-morning!"

"What do you think of letting Louie rest for another hour or so?" asked the girl. "I think he ought to stay in bed."

"He was sleeping very quietly," said Uncle David, "when I looked in on him a little while ago."

"I don't think we'd better do that, unless he consents to it," said Blake. "Gray an' I promised t' git him up in time fer breakfast. He seems t' have some special reason. . . ."

"Well," agreed Mattie reluctantly, "I suppose you'd better keep your word with him, and then let him decide what he wants to do. But he ought to rest—he looked terribly worn last night."

Gray and Blake went up to his room. They hesitated at the door, and Blake said to Gray,

"Yuh best look in first—then 'f he ain't awake we c'n go in quiet an' call him."

Gray opened the door and looked toward the bed where the old trapper lay. "He's fast asleep, just as Uncle David said."

Together they tip-toed to the bedside and bent over the quiet form. Louie's face bore a faint smile, and his eyes were closed; but there was no tell-tale rise and fall of the coverlet, no sound of breathing. Startled, the men looked into each other's eyes. Then Gray laid his hand gently on the trapper's forehead.

"Louie—is—dead!"

Side by side, with bowed heads, those two strong men stood by the body of Louie Lamont, stricken at the passing of him whom they had come to admire and trust. At length Gray drew the sheet over the old guide's face, after one long look at the smile which wreathed the lifeless lips.

Two days later they buried Louie Lamont beneath the great pine whose branches hung, heavy with snow, over the corner of the little cemetery beside the village school. Gray and Blake, with four of the older guides who knew and loved the old Frenchman, carried his coffin from the little white church, down the road to its final resting place. Behind, followed all the children of Orendaga, with the other villagers, a hush over the entire procession. In their minds lingered the words which Paul

Ward had said as the brief service came to a close: "For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide, even unto death" —and the smile on Louie's face confirmed the words.

Slowly the little band of mourners filed into the school yard, through the new fallen snow, and past the gate into the burial ground. Each child bore a twig of evergreen, and as they walked by the open grave the small branches were dropped in, making for their friend a balsam bed upon which to take his eternal sleep.

# CHAPTER XXIV.

## RIGHT PREVAILS

Somebody near you is struggling alone
  Over life's desert sand;
Faith, hope and courage together are gone,
  Reach him a helping hand;
Turn on his darkness a beam of your light;
Kindle, to guide him, a beacon-fire bright;
Cheer his discouragement, soothe his affright
  Lovingly help him to stand.

Somebody near you is hungry and cold;
  Send him some aid to-day;
Somebody near you is feeble and old,
  Left without human stay.
Under his burden put hands kind and strong:
Speak to him tenderly, sing him a song;
Haste to do something to help him along
  Over his weary way.

—*My Brother and I.*

ROB STEVENS, the keeper of the village store, in whom most of the legal powers of the town were vested, instructed Gray and Blake to proceed as Louie Lamont's executors on the day following the funeral. Accordingly, Gray arranged with a fur dealer for the disposition of the old trapper's packs.

"Guess this'll end all trace o' th' Kun-ja-muck myst'ry," said Cal Wilks as he joined the men in Stevens' store that evening.

"Seems that way," replied Isaiah Pikes, "but we'd oughter be satisfied with what Gray

an' Jack Blake did fer Louie, even if we don't learn no more 'bout th' myst'ry."

"Don't seem t' care so much, now that Louie's gone," rejoined Stevens a little sadly. "But jest th' same Gray an' Jack says they ain't goin' t' fergit them lone people up thar in th' woods."

On the next day Gray and Blake again set out on the Kun-ja-muck trail. Old Abe had told them that Louie left a considerable quantity of skins stored away in the attic of his cabin, and they had decided to make sure that everything was in order at the old Frenchman's camp before beginning their search for those whom Louie had been protecting. Gray and Blake had reconciled themselves to the fact that the mystery of the cave would probably now go unsolved; and yet they reasoned that the strangers might be compelled to disclose themselves in order to get the supplies with which Louie had formerly kept them furnished.

The two men plodded over the trail in silence; Louie had played so important a part in their lives for the last six months, that even in their close friendship for each other they could not find an adequate substitute for the companionship of the Frenchman. They stopped at the Silver Brook camp for additional supplies, but soon hastened on to Louie's cabin. Even before they had time to start a

fire in the great stone fireplace, they heard Scenty scratching at the door. The noise occasioned an exchange of perplexed glances. It had been easy enough for them to say they would take care of the pets, but they instantly realized that to do it, without Louie being present, was no easy undertaking.

"We'll build the fire first, and then feed them—but not in here," proposed Gray.

Packs were opened and food for each of the animals laid out.

"Them beasts sure must be hungry," observed Blake. "Course they c'n go an' come as they want, but they must o' looked t' Louie fer food, 'specially in th' winter."

"Well, we'll go around and unlock the side gate of the corral. If we begin to feed them here, they'll soon recognize us as friends."

Acting on this suggestion, the two men found the pets crowding up to the cabin door, ready to leap when it should be opened. The food apparently did not satisfy their hunger completely, and they unmistakably begged for more.

"Let's see if they'll follow us t' th' front door," said Blake.

The pets were, strange to say, as friendly and considerate with Gray and Blake as with Louie; and after giving them some more food the men went inside to prepare their own supper. Quite naturally, during the meal, their

talk drifted to serious things; the two men had implicit confidence in each other, and spoke frankly their inmost thoughts.

On this night Gray told Jack Blake of the change that had come in his life during his stay in the Adirondacks; how he had reacted to the beauty and largeness of nature, the influence of sincere and guileless men and women, and the spiritual realities of Louie Lamont.

As Gray paused in his talk while Blake put another log on the fire, he chanced to turn his eyes to the window, and was startled to behold the face of a man framed there. Blake's back was turned and he failed to see either the apparition or the look of consternation on Gray's face. As the latter stared, dumbfounded, he realized intuitively that those searching eyes which sought him who was not there, could belong to none other than the "Governor" whom Louie had been protecting. As Gray came to himself and called to Blake the face disappeared.

"A face, Jack, the Governor!" snapped Gray. "Quick, we'll get him!"

Both men rushed to the door and out onto the porch. The impenetrable darkness prevented their seeing more than a few feet beyond the cabin; overhead the pines groaned and strained in the wind, but no other sound could be heard.

"Halloa!" shouted Gray. His voice reverberated down the valley weirdly, but was suddenly drowned by the wind. Again he shouted, only to be mocked by the unexpected roar of a gust. The men stood on the porch for several minutes, hoping that the stranger, if alone, would conquer his timidity and come to the cabin.

"Come in!" invited Jack, and the hills threw back his plea unanswered. At last they returned to the fire inside, glad to feel its warmth again, for the blasts out of the north had chilled them to the marrow. Gray sat down upon the bearskin rug before the hearth, while Blake filled his pipe and sank into one of the great chairs near at hand; both men kept their eyes upon the little window, hoping for a return of their mysterious visitor. Presently Gray spoke.

"He was looking for Louie. He did not even seem to see us."

"What'd we best do?"

"Let's wait and see if he comes again. If he doesn't appear, we'll go in search of him when we've settled Louie's affairs here at the cabin."

For another hour they talked, mapping out their plan of action for the next few days. The animals in the corral had been noisy all the evening, but as Gray and Blake were about to lie down in their blankets, the disturbance

became so pronounced that they both remarked it.

"Funny they're kickin' up such a fuss, all on a sudden," said Blake. "Jest listen t' Baby growl."

"I have been listening to him. He seems to be running from one gate to the other. I guess we fed them too much."

"I'd open th' door an' give 'em th' dickens," mused Blake, "only they'd all be in th' house in a minute. 'F they keep it up we best go out with th' big torch an' see what's up."

The pets quieted down for a moment, and the men began to make up their bunks in silence.

"We're both thinking about the same thing," said Gray after a little while.

Blake smiled. "Guess we be," he answered. "D'yuh think th' Governor'll be back t'night?"

"That's the question. Baby knows him as well or better than Louie, and I can't help putting two and two together."

"But why'd th' bear growl? He never did it with Louie, 'cept when he was chased out with th' poker."

"There's Baby at it again!" said Gray, startled and somewhat nervous. The bear seemed to be banging against the gate of the corral in considerable excitement.

Blake seized and lighted two of Louie's home-made torches; they were well seasoned

and pitched, and blazed up brightly. The men pulled their caps over their ears, but did not wait to don any heavier clothing before running outside. They had just jumped off the end of the porch when Blake came upon fresh foot tracks in the snow. He nudged Gray with his elbow, indicating the tracks, and together they followed them around the cabin.

"All men, four of 'em anyways, wearin' heavy boots an' not moccasins!" whispered Blake. "All mixed up," he continued to mutter, his eyes following the tracks closely. "Thar goes th' tracks—each one fer himself!"

"Do you think Baby got after them?" questioned Gray in an undertone.

"Sh! Not so loud," cautioned the other. "They ain't so fer away, an' they c'n see whatever we do with these here torches."

"They may be friends and not foes," retorted Gray in a whisper.

" 'Tain't likely. Th' Governor didn't come in, an' he ain't a foe, 's far 's we know."

"Here comes Baby," announced Gray anxiously. "We'd better see what he'll do."

Running up to Blake, the bear acted just like a good-natured dog let out for a frolic. Then he dropped on all fours and sniffed the tracks which the men had followed around the cabin.

"He knows whar they be," commented Blake softly. "Come on, Gray," he continued in his natural voice. Then in a whisper, "We'll put

out th' torches at th' door. You go inside an' slam th' door, an' I'll stay outside on guard. Baby'll stay with me."

"Here comes Scenty," interrupted Gray.

"Take him inside with yuh," directed Blake. "He'll only whine an' want t' be fed 'f he stays here."

The skunk followed closely on Gray's heels as he entered the cabin. The man had just laid another log on the fire when he heard a sudden fierce growl from Baby and a challenge from Blake. "Who be yuh?"

"Hands up, er we'll fire!" came a gruff voice from the thicket.

There was a long moment of silence, punctuated by another growl from the bear.

"Put your hands up, quick!" came the command from the strange voice.

"Waal, how d'yuh know my hands ain't up?" was the cool answer.

Gray, meanwhile, had lost no time in seizing two of Louie's best guns. He examined them hastily to make certain they were loaded, and slipped out the back door, through the darkness, to Blake's side. There was no light outside the cabin, and Gray concluded that whoever was in the thicket could not be positive of the position of Blake and himself. Thrusting a gun toward the woodsman, he noticed that Baby lay at Blake's feet, watching the thicket whence the voice had come.

"It's Mike Murphy an' his gang," asserted Blake as he took the gun. "Go t' th' back o' th' cabin an' come in on 'em from th' side. I'll draw 'em on here."

Gray disappeared, Blake and the bear moving to a place behind a large tree.

"Why don't yuh come on, Mike?" demanded Blake. "I can't hold my hands up all night. I know jest what yuh're after—Louie's gone, an' yuh want t' steal what's left. Why don't yuh come an' git it?"

For some moments after Blake's challenge, nothing could be heard from the thicket. Baby lay at the guide's feet without a whimper, scenting in first one direction and then another, an indication that the gang was scattering, Indian like, intending to make a simultaneous rush from several angles. Nearer they came, the soft snow deadening the sound of their approach; they seemed to hesitate about making the final leap at Blake, possibly because they were not sure of his exact position. At a sudden shout from their leader, the four men bounded for the cabin porch like so many ravenous wolves, sure of their prey. As they reached the first step, Blake muttered a few words to the bear, gave him a push—and in an instant the beast was in their midst, growling and snarling in vicious fury as he sought to lay hold on one of the intruders.

Gray, at the other side of the cabin, could

hear naught but the scuffle in the snow, the growls of the bear, and occasional screams of profanity. As he rushed into the scuffle a rifle exploded on the night air, and he saw Blake charging on the struggling mass from the opposite side. In a moment a form detached itself from the group and with a flood of curses ran for the woods. The man tripped and fell, and immediately the bear was upon him.

"God help me!" Gray heard the piercing cry and ran toward the victim of the bear's savage attack.

"Baby, *Baby!* Heck, Baby!" called Gray, laying hold on the animal and tearing him away. The bear obeyed reluctantly, releasing his captive with many a low growl and baring of teeth.

"Hands up!" commanded Gray, levelling his gun at the man, who had risen and seemed ready to fight again. He backed the intruder against the cabin where the feeble light from within shone through the window. Looking at the man closely, Gray realized that he had never seen him before. He searched him carefully, found that he possessed no weapon, and ordered him to stay where he was, in the dim light.

"If you move," promised Gray, "I'll shoot to kill."

"All right," said the stranger. "I reckon I'm safe enough. You won't have to kill me."

Gray turned his attention to the battle by the porch steps. Blake had put one of his assailants out of the fight completely, and Gray now leaped toward one of the others, unseen, and held him up at the point of his rifle. After a brief tussle, Blake got the other by the throat and forced him into submission; the man proved to be Mike Murphy himself. Sandy Edwards stood sullenly at the end of Gray's gun, while Sam Woodward slowly picked himself up from the snow and stood silently with hanging head.

"So, it's th' three of yuh, huh!" panted Blake. "Waal, git inside th' cabin thar, fast!" With their hands above their heads, the trio limped into the cabin, Gray calling to the stranger that he was to follow them. While Gray covered the men with his rifle, Blake went through their pockets for weapons, removing Mike's long bowie knife which hung in a leather sheath at his belt.

"Who be you?" asked Blake savagely as he came to the stranger.

"I'm from the city," was the answer.

"Long ways from home, ain't yuh? What yuh doin' in this here mix-up?"

The stranger pointed to Mike, prefacing his answer with a stream of curses. "He sent for me to take charge of—"

"You keep yer mouth shut or I'll kill yuh when I git a chance," snarled Mike.

"And I ain't even seen enough to eat since I been here," continued the stranger. "If you'll let me go, I'll get out of this wilderness so far you'll never hear of me again. Talk about crooks and bootleggers! He beats 'em all. The Bowery never had one bad's him. Bootleggin'll make a devil out o' the best man."

Sam and Sandy stood sniffling and shifting from one foot to the other as if they wanted to speak, but were afraid.

"Waal, what's th' matter with you fellers?" demanded Blake, "snifflin' there like two boobs?" Hain't yuh got no manhood left? Sold out body an' soul, have yuh, t' this here rum-runnin' bully, Mike? Looks t' me 's if he calc'lated t' fix you fellers so's yuh'd never be good fer anythin' but doin' his dirty work fer him."

"Wa—al," sniffed Sam, "what kin we do, with him after us all th' time, bringin' us moonshine, makin' us drink, an' tellin' us if we don't help him in his rum business he'll run us out o' th' country er fix us so's we'll starve?"

"That's just what Abe and Theodore used to say," broke in Gray, who, now that the men were disarmed, rested the butt of his rifle on the floor beside him. "Abe used to say he'd gone too far, couldn't help himself; that the devil had got him, and he might as well give up. But when Louie got hold of him and

showed him there was a power that could break the grip of evil on a man and make him over, things began to look different.

"And now look at Abe, clean, and a man that you can trust."

"You fellers ought t' be 'shamed o' yoursel's," said Blake, as he laid the guns and knife he had taken from them on the table.

"Think o' yer wives and children hungry an' shiverin' with th' cold down in yer cabins yonder, while yer runnin' round up here with Mike tryin' t' steal Louie's things an' turn his camp into a bootleggin' joint. Yuh look 's if yuh hadn't had anythin' t' eat yersel's fer quite a spell."

"Ain't et nothin' all day," replied Sam, who looked more sheepish than ever.

Blake locked up the seized weapons in one of the cupboards along the wall, and got some cold potatoes and coffee for the four men, who cringed now at a look from either Gray or Blake. They ate with a very bad grace, Mike trying to be as insolent as possible without stirring his hosts to further violence.

"Guess you fellers best stay right here fer th' night," said Blake presently. "We'll make yuh safe enough."

The four would-be thieves lay down on the floor to rest as best they might. Blake awoke several times during the night, but saw that all was well, so he felt no cause for worry.

When morning dawned Blake gave the men twenty minutes to eat breakfast and leave the cabin. After the stated time, he set them loose on the trail, without their weapons. As they started off he called a word of warning to Mike, who with an insolent sneer led the way. They were indeed a sorry looking crew, their faces scratched from the fight in the bush, and bruises on their heads and hands, as they trailed, like whipped dogs, after their master.

As Gray and Blake watched them limp out of sight down the trail they were both thinking the same thing.

"What a beast that Mike is, anyway," broke out Gray.

"If it weren't for him, Sam and Sandy could straighten up and act like men. But just look at them now! Hardly a spark of manhood left in either of them—everything fine and noble about them drowned by the stuff they pour down their throats—slaves to appetites and the evil mind of this vicious bootlegger!"

# CHAPTER XXV.

## FINDING THE LIGHT

Once upon a time, in regions far away,
There came a drought, so dreadful, as men say,
That the rivers, springs and running brooks were dried,
And every plant and flower had drooped and died.
The birds, poor suffering creatures, ceased to sing,
And all the land was famishing.

She saw a sad and careworn stranger stand
Before the door, and in his trembling hand
She placed the cup with cooling crystal draught
For which all thirsted, but which none had quaffed.

He took, and lo! a soft and yet a radiant light,
About him shone, and glorified the night,
"Blessed is he," in loving accents came,
"That gives a cup of water in my name."
Six sparkling diamonds gemmed the golden cup
And from within, there came all bursting up
A fountain, sending out on every hand
Clear, flowing streams, that watered all the land.

The diamonds rose above the tree-tops far,
Till each in heaven's high dome became a star;
There nightly, still the upward gazing eye
Beholds the starry dipper in the sky,
Showing the world with what a light divine,
Through all the years, unselfish acts may shine.

ON Friday morning, Gray proposed that they visit the Kun-ja-muck Cave that afternoon. They had watched in vain for the Governor's return, and upon looking for his tracks the morning after the apparition

at the window, they found them obliterated by the blowing snow. Things were pretty well settled now at Louie's cabin, since the two men had taken all the remaining furs down to Orendaga and had arranged for the disposal of most of the cabin furnishings. The buildings themselves were to remain in Blake's charge; he had decided to board up the cabin for the present, and just after announcing this plan to Gray, the latter surprised his friend seated on the porch in a fit of deep abstraction.

"What's the trouble, old man?" asked Gray, while Blake started out of his reverie with a short laugh.

"I was jest thinkin'," drawled Blake. "This here cabin an' fixin's would make a great place t' live durin' th' summer—'specially 'f yuh had a fam'ly. Mattie jest loves it up here, too," he added irrelevantly.

They lost little time in preparing for the trip to the cave, piling Louie's sled with supplies and blankets, with a light pack for each man in addition.

"We c'n git t' Elm Lake b'fore dark," observed Blake as they were about to start off, an hour or so after the noon-day meal. "We best stop at th' Silver Brook camp t' see 'f everythin's all right, an' from thar we c'n foller th' Kun-ja-muck, walkin' on th' ice, across th' lake."

Everything at the Silver Brook cabin was as

they had left it. Fresh tracks, however, were found around the cabin, and these they studied very carefully.

"They belong t' a man an' woman," said Blake after a close scrutiny, "an' they both wore home-made moccasins. They must've been here las' night, or this forenoon, 'cause it snowed 'til 'bout midnight las' night. 'Pears like they only come this far an' went back down th' Kun-ja-muck when they saw thar wa'n't nobody t' home here."

The men followed the tracks as long as the light would permit, but as they came to the bend where South Pine Lake empties into the Kun-ja-muck, the tracks led to the east trail, higher up on the mountain side.

"We'll go straight to the cave," proposed Gray. "Talk just as much as you want to, Jack —I don't think we'd better try to take them by surprise."

In less than two hours after they left Elm Lake, Gray and Blake were standing before the entrance to the Kun-ja-muck Cave. The mouth of the cavern was blocked by a stout wooden barricade, in which was a door that opened outward. As the place was in complete darkness, they searched for tracks with their lanterns, but without finding a trace of a human being.

"Blessed 'f that ain't funny," muttered Blake. "We follered 'em 's far 's that moun-

tain brook over thar, but from thar t' here there ain't no sign o' life."

Gray pounded on the door of the cave, and halloaed loudly; the only reply was an echo that sounded down the valley. The men determined to build a fire in front of the cave and to rest and get warm before continuing their quest.

"Perhaps they'll see our fire and come to us," suggested Gray. After an hour of desultory conversation he asked Blake if it were not better to eat before going farther. Blake replied in the affirmative, and they unpacked the basket which had been prepared for their own need and others, if necessary.

They had just finished eating and were wondering where to spend the night, when a man stepped from the shadows into the bright circle of fire light. He was clad in fur suit and cap, and wore moccasins, enabling him to approach the two men without warning them of his coming. Gray and Blake had their backs turned to the stranger, when Gray suddenly wheeled about and beheld the same face he had seen through the window of Louie's cabin.

"Have you any news of Louie Lamont?" the stranger asked in a low, faltering voice, as though the words were spoken with great effort. Blake swung around at the sound of the man's voice, and advanced to Gray's side.

"You—you—are the Governor?" questioned Gray, all else forgotten in the moment of meet-

ing, face to face, the mysterious man of the Kun-ja-muck Cave.

"That is what Louie called me," replied the man hurriedly, "but speak, has anything happened to him?"

As he put the question anxiously, a second person slipped from the shadows and came quietly and quickly to his side. They were dressed alike; but the newcomer was smaller than the Governor, slim but strong with a supple grace. As the face passed out of the shadow into the fire light, Gray and Blake saw that it was a girl of not more than twenty —Louie's "Queen." As the Governor searched their faces apprehensively for news of Louie, the two men stared at the striking beauty of the girl in wonderment.

"Is he living or dead?" The Governor stretched out his hand even as he spoke, as if fearing the worst.

"Louie Lamont lives—but his body is dead," replied Gray solemnly. The very mention of the old trapper's death brought back to him a flood of memories that held him in silence for a moment. The girl grasped the Governor's arm convulsively and buried her head on his shoulder, but she did not sob audibly. For a moment the man dropped his head, his lips moving inaudibly; then he stood erect and stretched his hand slowly to Gray, then to Blake.

"I already know your name, sir," he said slowly, but firmly, "and also that of Mr. Blake. I have known you both through Louie, and have trusted you even as you trusted him. My name is Harrison—and this is my daughter, Dolly."

The girl grasped the hands of Gray and Blake in turn, giving each a smile, but afraid to trust her voice to speak quite yet. The shock of Louie's death was poignant to her; it was hard to realize that the only friend she and her father had had for three years had slipped out silently in the night. They sat by the fire quietly for a little while, the Governor and the Queen struggling to adjust themselves to this new order of things, now that their friend and protector was gone; Gray and Blake searching their minds for words to make it easier. Presently, at the girl's request, Gray told of Louie's passing, as simply and in as few words as possible. As he finished, her eyes were misty but her face radiant.

"The news you bring to us saddens us," she said softly, placing her arm about her father's shoulders, "yet we cannot but feel a joy that stirs our souls—for Louie came to be such a man! He was strong in faith, true to his promises, and forgot himself altogether in his devotion to others."

"We have here on Louie's sled some supplies for you," said Gray, abruptly directing

their minds away from that which was so trying.

"You are just like Louie," said the Governor. "He never failed us until now, and we knew that we should be provided for in the same thoughtful way that was his own. But come up to our cabin on the cliff—where we have lived for three years. Louie helped us to build it, and there is room for you as there was always room for him."

"We would better follow the brook as far as the cliff," said Dolly, smiling at Gray and Blake. "It will be much easier walking for our friends."

Gray and Blake accepted the Governor's invitation eagerly. They gathered up the things they had used for supper, placing them in one of the packs; then, seizing the sleigh, they followed the Governor and the Queen. Up over the ice on the frozen brook they went, along the base of the cliff which rose above the cave, and around to the rear of the almost perpendicular bluff. As they neared the top, the Governor fell back to help Gray and Blake with the sleigh, for the ascent was very steep and dangerously slippery in spots. Rounding the end of the cliff, they left the brook and struck off directly through the woods in such a direction that they would reach the top of the precipice immediately above the cave. After a few minutes of plodding, a dark shape

loomed up ahead, and they approached what Gray and Blake rightly guessed to be a cabin. Dolly, who had been carrying a lantern, ran ahead; they heard a door open, and soon a light streamed out over the snow.

"Please come in!" called the girl, appearing in the doorway with a lighted candle in her hand. As they entered, the Governor asked his companions to bring Louie's sleigh inside the cabin, where it might be unpacked more easily. The things were quickly taken off and handed to Dolly for disposal. She had removed her cap and coat, and as Gray looked at her face, flushed with the recent exercise, his pulses quickened and he dropped his eyes, surprised in the act of staring at her with ill-concealed admiration.

After a hastily prepared meal, Gray and Blake were shown to their room in the west wing of the cabin. Conversation during the supper had been in snatches only, as the Governor and the Queen found it impossible, try hard as they might, to be themselves completely under the shadow of their bereavement. Gray and Blake were as considerate as they knew how to be, and requested that they might be early in bed, as their day had been a hard one.

"And we thought they lived in a cave!" said Gray as he closed the door to their room.

"Waal," said Blake, "we might o' known

that anybody who could change Louie th' way they did, couldn't live in a hole in th' rock. I guess they must o' used th' cave fer a kind o' summer house."

"Where are we, anyway, Jack? You know this region, and I must confess I don't quite see where we came to along that brook."

"We're somewhere 'bout th' cave—that's all I know. That brook's what made us lose track o' whar we was goin'. This here cabin must be on a ledge, cut off'n everythin' else, with th' stream th' only approach."

"By all the loves of Pharaoh!" said Gray softly, after they had blown out the candle, "we've got the mystery at last!"

"But we don't know why they're here!" reminded Blake, pulling his blanket snugly around himself.

Dolly and the Governor were up before dawn the next morning; they had slept but little, and Dolly found her father already sitting in his camp-made Morris chair when she came from her old-fashioned alcove, the front of which was screened with strings of pine cones and red berries. She and her father worked silently, putting the cabin in order and preparing breakfast for four.

The sun shone into the front window of the cabin before Gray and Blake were called. The Governor greeted them both with a hearty hand shake as they came into the room. He

and Dolly were pleasantness itself during the meal; both were easy in their manner, and the devotion which they obviously felt for each other was almost childlike in its intensity and simplicity.

After breakfast the Governor pushed back his chair and spoke to Dolly.

"I will show these gentlemen the marvellous view from the cliff and Rainbow Falls, while you are doing the dishes."

"Oh, Daddy," pleaded the girl, "are you going to desert me the very first time you have company? Think of it, you have stayed with me for three years—and now you're going to leave me alone!"

Gray looked at Dolly, and before he realized it, was begging to be allowed to stay at the cabin to help with the dishes. She laughingly insisted that he go to see the view, and was easily persuaded to come herself, leaving the work until later.

"Dolly has tramped these hills with me for so long that even the trees and rocks seem to speak to her as she goes along," said the Governor with a fond look at his daughter.

Leading the little party to the top of the cliff, the Governor pointed out the Kun-ja-muck, icy and glittering in the sunlight, and far off down the valley, the Sacandaga, a white ribbon winding toward Orendaga. Beginning at the rock beside which they stood was a trail, ex-

tremely faint, leading around the end of the cliff opposite to the one they had encircled coming up the night before.

"It is the only way of reaching our cabin," said the Governor, "except by the brook, as we came last night."

At Dolly's suggestion they started down the barely discernible trail, planning to make the circuit of the cliff base, returning up the stream.

"Waal, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Blake as he gazed about in perplexity. "I thought I knew every foot o' this here country, fr'm th' Sacandaga t' Round Lake, but I ain't ever laid eyes on this place afore!"

"Neither have any of the lumbermen," replied the Governor. "You see, these trees up here are all virgin timber. There are not many of them, and I suppose they're too hard to get at."

"That's jest th' reason they ain't ever been disturbed," affirmed Blake.

The trail was slippery and treacherous; Gray proffered assistance to Dolly again and again, but she laughingly refused, skipping ahead of the others with a sureness of foot that surprised them. In a few minutes they reached the bottom and drew near the entrance to the cave.

"We saw your fire and came down this way last night," said Dolly. "We could hear every

word you spoke. Look," pointing upward, "do you see that overhanging tree, that maple, way up there on the cliff?"

Gray craned his neck to see.

"That is just in front of our cabin," continued Dolly. "It has been our lookout ever since we've been here."

"Let us sit down in the lee of that great rock over there," proposed the Governor, "and rest awhile."

As they made themselves comfortable, Richard Harrison became grave, and presently spoke.

"I feel that this is where I should explain to you why Dolly and I are here, and why we have been here for the past three years," he began slowly, weighing every word. "For fifteen years I had been associated with one of the big universities here in the East—a professor of science; and now that I can look back upon those years I realize that the more I studied, the more knowledge I gained, the more my faith in things eternal became constantly contracted and dwarfed. I tried to have it otherwise, but in those surroundings, faith in anything that I could not fathom and explain seemed impossible. I became sure that science and religion were two very different creeds and could not be reconciled to each other. Dolly's mother reasoned with me again and again, saying that I was wrong; and I felt

grieved to think she and Dolly could not believe as I did. She told me that I had not seen far enough, and she was right—I must confess it now. Then, when my daughter was but eighteen, the mother passed away—"

The Governor's voice trembled, and Dolly drew near to her father, pressing his arm gently.

"I could not understand her death—it was so sudden, so unexpected, so unjust, I thought. How could there be a God so merciless—? Where could I go for comfort? Not to my science, not to my friends, not to the pleasures of the world—everything was black for me, black as midnight. I had read the Bible before, of course, but mostly for the sake of disagreeing with the things which my science proved false; then I turned to it for comfort and light, reading it humbly, seeking for a faith that could satisfy.

"The Christ I read about was driven to the wilderness for forty days—to come forth a victor; the Apostle Paul sought solitude for three years—and was made strong, never to be turned aside or confused again. So I came up to the hills with Dolly, to get away from things, to be alone, that I might settle the doubts which had shaken me so profoundly. And I have seen the great Light, much as did Paul on the road to Damascus. Ah, how I have

prayed on my knees in this very spot, pouring out my soul to that God who had taken from me my wife, begging that I might find the truth. And Dolly—how she has comforted me with her steady faith. If she had not been with me to lead me on, I think I might have given up.

"And when the 'Sun of righteousness arose with healing in his wings,' I saw it was not wasting time to remain here in the woods; for in simple worship and communion with the Infinite I found such peace as I had never known. Our first Christmas was spent with Louie, as you know. Dolly became his guide, his 'queen,' and it was she who showed him the way. He told you how we had been sent into the wilderness to find him, in answer to the earnest prayers of his old mother—and to see him safe at last is worth the whole world. God touched Louie, and I saw him change. I did not understand the power of Christianity until I saw it make Louie Lamont the man he grew to be. It is clear to me now, and I know."

The Governor's voice died away into silence.

"I, too, have seen," said Gray, slowly, "seen the vision of life, and the power of Christian influence in Louie Lamont. God has spoken to me through him and through nature, in a voice unmistakable."

As the light of the morning streamed through the forest, Gray slowly turned his eyes from the splendor of the day to Dolly's face, and in its radiance read that sympathy of understanding which filled his heart with a new peace.

THE END.

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